HOME CINEMA Choice
HIGH-PERFORMANCE SOUND & VISION

WIN! An SVS Prime 5.1 speaker system + more!



Exclusive!

Sharp shooter

Epson's high-end laser projector lights up your movies

ON TEST

Samsung 4K TV
Yamaha AV amp
Dolby Atmos speakers
Polk soundbar

Freeview Play
Digital TV gets a Smart makeover

SUPER BLU-RAY?
Is *Big Hero 6* the new king of HD animation?
See p99

- INTERSTELLAR
- THE HOBBIT 3
- UNBROKEN
- THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY
- & MORE

50 Best B-movies on Blu-ray!
Low-budget flicks you can't miss

INSIDE AFFORDABLE PROJECTOR GROUP TEST ➜ SONY 4K VIDEO WALL ➜ DTS DOES 3D SOUND ➜ TOP-TEN GEAR GUIDE ➜ STAR WARS ON DIGITAL HD

www.homecinemachoice.com
ISSUE 247 JUNE 2015 £4.75
AUS- $11.99 NZ- $13.50 CAN- $14.50
9 771359 627101 06

6 MONTHS NETFLIX ULTRA HD
A GIFT TO YOU FROM LG*

GREAT TELEVISIONS DESERVE GREAT STORIES....



Watch these titles on Netflix. Select content available in UHD 4K.

65/55UF950V

Netflix is packed full of TV shows and movies all available to stream on your favourite device. With 6 months of Netflix, in addition to all the standard and HD content available, you can enjoy a growing selection of shows in 4K UHD on your new LG UHD Smart TV. Give your television the entertainment it deserves available on Netflix now. For more information about what's available in 4K UHD please visit:

www.lg.com/uk/netflix

NETFLIX

LG Life's Good

*selected models only. Terms and conditions apply.

Better Call Saul © 2015 Sony Pictures Television Inc. All Rights Reserved. Breaking Bad © 2013 Sony Pictures Television Inc. All Rights Reserved.

HOME CINEMA Choice

www.homecinemachoice.com

EDITORIAL TEAM
Editor Mark Craven
mark.craven@homecinemachoice.com
Deputy Editor Anton van Beek
anton.vanbeek@homecinemachoice.com
Art Editor John Rook

CONTRIBUTORS
Steve May, Adrian Justins, Danny Phillips, John Archer, Vincent Teoh, Ed Selley, Adam Rayner, Ian Calcutt
Photography Mike Prior, Claire Collins

ADVERTISING
Senior Advertising Executive Jo Holmes
Tel: 01689 869 919
E-mail: joanna.holmes@homecinemachoice.com
Advertising Manager Shannon Bombach
Tel: 07710 934932
E-mail: shannon.bombach@homecinemachoice.com

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK: New, Renewals and Enquiries
Tel: +44 (0) 1858 438798
E-mail: mytimemedia@subscription.co.uk
USA & CANADA: New, Renewals and Enquiries
(001)-866-647-9191
REST OF WORLD: New, Renewals and Enquiries
Tel: +44 (0) 1689 869 896
BACK ISSUES
Tel: 0844 848 8822
From outside UK: +44 (0) 2476 322234
Email: customer.services@myhobbystore.com
www.myhobbystore.co.uk

MANAGEMENT TEAM
Group Editor Paul Miller, paul.miller@avtechmedia.co.uk
Group Sales Manager Dun can Armstrong
Head of Design and Production Julie Miller
Subscriptions Manager Kate Hall
Chief Executive Owen Davies
Chairman Peter Harkness

Published by MyTimeMedia Ltd
Enterprise House, Enterprise Way
Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF
Tel: 0844 412 2262
From outside the UK: +44 (0) 1689 869 840

Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd

TEST WALL IMAGES:
©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CUI QUNYING
©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SIMON INGATE

AVTech media inc

Home Cinema Choice, ISSN 1359-6276, is published monthly with an additional issue in May by AVTech Media Ltd, a division of MYTIMEMEDIA Ltd, Enterprise House, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF, UK. The US annual subscription price is 65GBP (equivalent to approximately 108USD). Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to Home Cinema Choice, Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at CDS GLOBAL Ltd, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicester, LE16 9EF. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



If you can't always find a copy of this magazine, help is at hand! Complete this form and hand in at your local store, they'll arrange for a copy of each issue to be reserved for you. Some stores may even be able to arrange for it to be delivered to your home. Just ask!

Subject to availability

Please reserve/deliver my copy of Home Cinema Choice on a regular basis, starting with issue:

Title ..... First name .....

Surname .....

Address .....

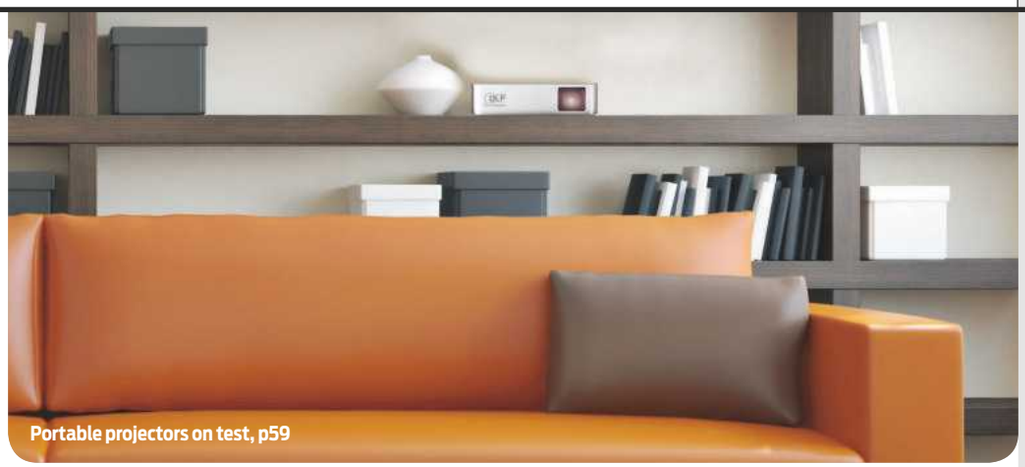
.....

.....

Postcode .....

Telephone number .....

If you don't want to miss an issue Just ask!



WELCOME



Late last month I made a trip into London's Leicester Square to attend the media screening of *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, held in the cavernous Screen One of the Odeon cinema. Weaving through the hundreds of excited journos, my HCC colleagues Steve and Anton made an immediate bee-line for the front-row seats. The result was the best view in the house. Well, certainly the biggest.

If you're the kind of film fan that pushes their way to the front, then **for your home cinema a projector and screen is surely the way to go**. And this issue we're taking a look at domestic models both high-end (Epson's new laser-guided EH-LS10000, p40) and bargain-priced (our portable PJ grouptest, p59), to give you a taste of what's available. Naturally, Epson's premium projector is the most immediately impressive (it is, let's be honest, brilliant), but that doesn't mean the budget brands don't also surprise us. Enjoy the show!

Mark Craven
Editor



MENU









Contributors



John Archer: The UK's most experienced TV tester cut his teeth as an early *HCC* staffer



Richard Stevenson: Industry veteran and former Editor of UK CE trade journal *ERT*



Steve May: *HCC*'s former Editor-in-Chief is one of the UK's most respected AV journos



Martin Pipe: Technical expert Martin is renown throughout the home cinema industry



Adam Rayner: The UK's foremost expert in extreme audio writes about bass, hi-fi and, er, cartoons



Adrian Justins: Made his name as the editor of *What Video & TV* and *What Home Cinema*

FEATURES

In-depth interviews and special reports. Starts... p18

COVER STORY

18 What's in the future for Freeview?

Featuring the new Freeview Play platform, 4K broadcasts and why another switchover could be on the cards...

COVER STORY

24 The 50 best B movies on Blu-ray & DVD

From schlock horror to blockbuster rip-offs, these low-budget flicks can't be missed!

34 Bargain basement!

Costing less than £10,000, this screening room really piqued our interest

88 Certified: AV-Holic

Another *HCC* reader shares their AV setup

SELECT

Looking for new AV kit? Starts… p109

109 Gear guide

The best home cinema kit money can buy

BULLETIN

The place for hot products, trends and technology. Starts... p7

07 Revamped flagship

Denon's top-end receiver gets an AV overhaul

08 Life is short

Stylish Sony short-throw projector hits the UK

09 DTS sheds light on DTS:X

Company confirms that its Atmos rival audio format will arrive on AVRs later this year

10 Dolby Vision TVs to hit US

The High Dynamic Range shakedown begins as TV streamer Vudu picks a side

12 Amazon targets internet TV

Blazing streaming stick leads the way, but HDR is also on the cards this year

13 News x10

Featuring Samsung, HBO and Spotify

14 Geriaction man...

Taken 3 beefs up with an 'Extended Harder Cut' on Blu-ray this Summer

REGULARS

Whether you want our opinions or your own, these are the places to look. Starts... p77

77 Digital copy

Mark Craven just can't see the reasoning behind the Digital HD version of *Star Wars*

78 Film fanatic

Anton van Beek wonders where Hollywood's love of 'shared cinematic universes' will end

80 Picture this

When it comes to lighting your viewing room, pro calibrator Vincent Teoh has a clear bias

82 Feedback

Share your thoughts with other AV addicts

122 AV Avenger

Don't let the internet destroy your movie collection, warns AV evangelist Steve May

COMPETITIONS

84 Great Blu-rays to be won!

Big Hero 6, *Ex_Machina* and *Orange is the New Black: Season Two* Blu-rays up for grabs!

WIN! SVS Prime 5.1 loudspeaker system worth over £1,000! p16

SUBSCRIBE! Sign up to the world's best AV magazine and you'll save money and get some great gifts **p22**



40
'This is laser home cinema, and it's nothing less than a revolution in bigscreen viewing'











REVIEWS

With a focus on performance, these are in-depth tests you can trust... p39

COVER STORY
40 Epson EH-LS10000
This sharp-shooting, 4K-enhanced laser projector is a home cinema revelation

COVER STORY
44 Pioneer S series 5.0.4
Integrated speaker array offers a fuss-free way of adding Atmos to your cinema setup

48 Optoma NuForce AVP-18/MCA-20
Go back to basics with this modestly-priced processor/power amp pairing

52 Samsung BD-J7500
Fulsome features and efficient performance make this Blu-ray deck worth a gander

54 Q Acoustics 3000i 5.1 Cinema Pack
British speaker brand shakes up the compact competition with this affordable system

COVER STORY
59 Grouptest: Portable projectors
Four bargain-priced and feature-packed portable projectors enter the *HCC* test-pit: Asus's S1, Optoma's ML750e, Philips' PicoPix PPX3614 and Viewsonic's PLED-VW800

COVER STORY
66 Samsung UE48JU7000
Mid-priced 4K/UHD TV gets lots right only to come a bit of a cropper in motion

68 Yamaha RX-A2040
This premium nine-channel Dolby Atmos AV receiver is a blindingly good listen

70 BK Electronics P12-300SB-DF
Essex-based bass specialist unleashes a brawny 12-incher for under £500

COVER STORY
72 Polk MagniFi
Mid-range soundbar/sub system promises to put dialogue back on the centre stage

75 Grace Digital Encore
Standalone internet radio

75 Sony MDR-1ADAC
Headphones with a hidden talent

PLAYBACK

The latest Blu-rays, DVDs and videogames reviewed and rated. Starts... p93

94 Interstellar
95 Into the Woods; Penguins of Madagascar: Deluxe Edition; The Theory of Everything; Horrible Bosses 2: Extended Cut
96 The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies 3D
98 Bloodborne
Orange is the New Black: Season Two
Broadchurch: Series Two
The Musketeers: Series Two
99 Big Hero 6
100 The Long Good Friday + Mona Lisa
101 Unbroken; The Drop
Big Eyes; Tales of Hoffman
The Offense
102 Blood and Black Lace
What We Do in the Shadows
Village of the Damned
Extraterrestrial
Night Train Murders
104 The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne
Midnight Run
Sweet Smell of Success
Dead Man



ELEVATE YOUR SENSES





DOLBY ATMOS®

R SERIES

R50 Dolby Atmos-enabled Speaker

Dolby Atmos® upgrades you to a whole new dimension in home theatre enjoyment by more realistically locating the position and movement of sounds. And with KEF's new R50 speaker module, you realise the full potential of this exciting new format. Heightened emotions and physical sensations. More intense involvement with the action on screen. A more complete 3D experience – the one the director intended.

From KEF, the pioneers of high resolution home theatre sound.

www.kef.com

KEF

GP Acoustics (UK) Limited, Eccleston Road, Tovil, Maidstone,
Kent, ME15 6QP, UK Tel: +44 (0)1622 672261

Dolby, Dolby Atmos, Dolby Surround, and the double-D symbol are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories.

BULLETIN

→NEWS HIGHLIGHTS **SONY** Ultra-stylish ultra-short throw 4K projector coming to the UK **DTS:X** Surround sound specialist spills the beans on its Atmos rival **DOLBY VISION** High Dynamic Range frontrunner partners with Vizio **AMAZON** Fire TV stick blazes a trail for 'net TV **NEWS X10** The hottest news stories in bite-sized chunks **TAKEN 3** Longer cut coming to DVD and BD in June **AND MUCH MORE!**

Revamped flagship

Denon AVR-X7200W/WA → www.denon.co.uk



Owners of Denon's top-end AVR-X7200W will soon be able to upgrade it to support HDCP 2.2 copy protection, ensuring compatibility with forthcoming 4K video sources. The upgrade, which also extends to the Marantz AV8802 processor, needs to implemented at a Denon Service Centre and will cost around €200 – a factory upgraded model, dubbed the AVR-X7200WA, will begin rolling out to stores soon. Denon's flagship receiver claims 9 x 210W amplification, 11-channel processing and Dolby Atmos playback. It also has an extra trick up its sleeve – see page 9 for details...

HCC ONLINE...

Looking for breaking AV news, blogs, features, & reviews? For your daily fix visit us at www.homecinemachoice.com Follow us on Twitter @hccmag

Life is short...

Sony LSPX-W1S → www.sony.co.uk/pro/product/LSPX-W1S



Sony is promising to transform your wall into a 'life-size window to another world' when its new ultra-short throw 4K/Ultra HD projector hits the UK this Summer. Capable of projecting a 147in 4K image onto a wall from just 28in, the stylish LSPX-W1S has been designed to look like a piece of furniture when not in use. The company says the projector represents the first steps in its new Life Space UX concept, which is dedicated to transforming living spaces into 'enriched experiential environments'. UK pricing has yet to be confirmed, but given the $50,000 price-tag in the US, we expect it to be in excess of £30,000. We want one.

Bargain 5.1 array



The Aluma 2200 is the latest 5.1-channel speaker package from German loudspeaker specialist Quadral and is aimed at those after an affordable compact array for their movie room. Priced at just £550, the system consists of four wall-mountable two-way satellites rated 85Hz-22kHz, a 'sleek and slender' centre speaker and the 100W QUBE 7 active subwoofer, which employs an 8.5in driver. The Aluma 2200 is available in black anodized and white lacquered finishes.
www.nunudistribution.co.uk

Full HD projector pair



Vivitek has introduced two new models to its line up of 3D Ready Full HD home cinema projectors. The H1188 arrived in April with an £850 price tag, promising 2,000 Lumens brightness with a 50,000:1 contrast ratio, as well as MHL support for video/audio streaming, ISF calibration and VividMotion picture technology. Meanwhile, May's £650 HD1186 (pictured) drops the VividMotion tech, but adds SRS WOW audio support and a 'high-efficiency' lamp promising 7,000 hours life in eco mode.
www.vivitek.eu

Sony adds new AVRs

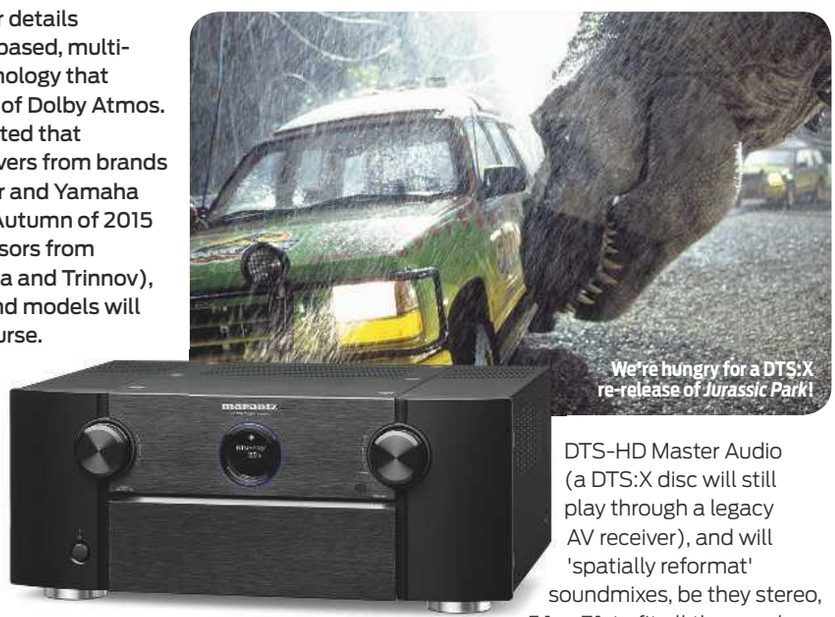


Sony is giving its 2015 home cinema range a boost with the addition of a pair of AV receivers. The STR-DN1060 (pictured) and STR-DN860 are both 7.2-channel models that promise to deliver 165W- and 150W-per-channel respectively. Other features include support for hi-res audio (including multichannel DSD) and HDCP 2.2 passthrough. However, some may consider the brand's boast of 'best-in-class' AV performance hampered somewhat by a lack of support for Dolby Atmos and/or DTS:X.
www.sony.co.uk

DTS sheds light on DTS:X

Next-gen object-based sound format to arrive on AVRs later this year

DTS has unveiled further details about DTS:X, its object-based, multi-dimensional audio technology that follows hot on the heels of Dolby Atmos. The company has indicated that DTS:X-capable AV receivers from brands including Onkyo, Pioneer and Yamaha will be available by the Autumn of 2015 (as will high-end processors from Steinway Lyngdorf, Theta and Trinnov), and that more brands and models will be announced in due course.



We're hungry for a DTS:X re-release of *Jurassic Park*!

As for existing hardware, Denon's AVR-X7200W (see p7) and Marantz's AV8802 (pictured) will add DTS:X compatibility via a firmware upgrade later this year.

'DTS:X replicates a real-world sound environment that transports the audience into a new dimension of sound immersion by delivering truly captivating entertainment experiences in the cinema and at home,' claims the company.

It is very much akin to Dolby Atmos, then (and will have 'an element of height in the mix', according to chief marketing officer Kevin Doohan), although the format is not tied to speaker configurations or a specific number of audio channels. You can put your speakers 'virtually anywhere', says DTS, within a hemispherical layout, which should mean compatibility with existing Atmos layouts.

DTS:X at home

For home cinema hedz, DTS has firmed up some details. Firstly, DTS:X is backwards-compatible with DTS-HD Master Audio (a DTS:X disc will still play through a legacy AV receiver), and will 'spatially reformat' soundmixes, be they stereo, 5.1 or 7.1, to fit all the speakers in a surround sound system – DTS:X AVRs will support an 11.2-channel output.

AVR owners will be able to control the volume of specific audio elements at home, says DTS, if content creators choose to implement the feature in the soundmix.

As for software, DTS says it is currently working with several major studios and mixing stages in Los Angeles and beyond to evaluate the potential of DTS:X. Content announcements will be made by the studios when ready. What this means in terms of home cinema is: don't expect DTS:X Blu-ray platters to arrive any time soon. However, it also means that DTS will be returning to commercial cinemas, competing with Dolby's Atmos and Barco's Auro-3D formats in the next-gen audio stakes.

Playlist...

Team *HCC* spins up its disc picks of the month

Daredevil (Netflix)



This 13-part Netflix superhero series brings Marvel's 'Man Without Fear' to the small screen in epic style. Superior TV that bodes well for future Marvel-Netflix collaborations.

Marvel's Avengers 3D (All-region US BD)



The cinema release of the sequel was all the excuse we needed to revisit the (uncut US) Blu-ray of this superhero slobberknocker!

Banished: Series One (R2 DVD)



A fine DVD outing for the BBC's thrilling period drama – although we're still miffed that this gorgeous show didn't merit a Blu-ray release.

Kiss Me Kate 3D (All-region US BD)



As well as plenty of great tunes, this 1953 musical is one of the most immersive 3D Blu-rays available!

The Bogey Man (All-region BD)



Uli Lommel's completely bonkers supernatural slasher looks better than ever remastered in hi-def.

Extras...

Small items that could make a big impression

Hot Toys Black Widow



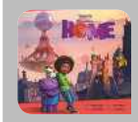
Let's face it, starlet Scarlett Johansson is never likely to drop into your cinema room, but we can point you towards the next best thing: Hot Toys' stunning 1/6th scale Black Widow figure. Part of the brand's new line of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* figurines and distributed in the US and Europe by Sideshow Collectibles, the slinky secret agent will set you back around $300 including VAT.

The Scarlet Gospels



Clive Barker puts the final nail in the coffin (or should that be skull?) of his most iconic creation in this new novel that pits *Hellraiser*'s Pinhead against fan-favourite occult detective Harry D'Amour. Things are about to get very messy...

The Art of Home



Titan Books delivers a feast for the eyes with this companion book to DreamWorks' latest animated feature film, *Home*. Written by Ramin Zahed (editor in chief of *Animation Magazine*) the book balances its gorgeous visuals with insightful commentary on the making of the movie.

Dolby Vision TVs to hit US

HDR standards shakedown begins as TV streamer Vudu picks a side

Dolby Vision, one of the frontrunners in the still confused HDR (High Dynamic Range) race, has announced its first broadcast partner. Dolby Vision support will debut on high-end UHD sets from American market leader Vizio this summer, with content delivered via Vudu, the Wallmart-owned video-on-demand streaming service.

Vizio will ship two compatible high-brightness 4K screens, its Reference Series 65in and 120in LED models. Warner Bros. has been announced as the first provider of HDR material to Vudu.

Currently there are a number of different HDR standards vying for industry acceptance, from Open Standard HDR, to proposals from the BBC, Philips and Dolby. However, levels of recommended peak brightness and implementation vary. The Vizio TVs feature a full-array LED backlight capable of 800 Nits brightness, coupled to 384 Active LED zones of contrast control. Content professionals suggest that HDR is a more significant TV upgrade than Ultra HD resolution, because improvements in peak brightness and contrast are easier to appreciate than raw detail.

Vizio isn't alone in the HDR race. Amazon has also announced an HDR streaming service (see p12), but has yet to reveal what standard it intends to adopt.



Vizio's debut Dolby Vision HDR TV



Joris Evers: 'In three to five years we expect half of all TVs sold to be HDR 4KTVs. The transformation is going to be really fast'

Netflix hints at similar plans. 'In three to five years, we expect half of all TVs sold will be HDR 4K TVs. The transformation is going really fast,' Joris Evers, Netflix director of corporate communications tells *HCC*. He teases that a Netflix HDR service will 'probably' launch this year. 'This is now about getting better pixels, not just more pixels,' he adds. 'Imagine seeing a sun reflect over a lake on your TV and feeling like you should grab your sunglasses. HDR ensures you see extremely accurate colours and dynamic range. HDR transforms the experience of watching TV. The deeper blacks, the brighter highlights, really transform it. They give it a level of reality that you've never experienced before.'

Hollywood headaches

The adoption of HDR has massive implications for the Hollywood content farm as well. Warner Bros. says it has already remastered a number of titles for brighter HDR presentation via Vudu, including *Edge of Tomorrow*, *Into the Storm* and *The Lego Movie*. Until now, film and TV has been mastered to the Rec 709 standard, first devised for 100 Nit CRT displays. By any standards this is dull. Today, even non-HDR screens offer 300-450 Nit brightness.

While there have been no studio partnerships confirmed yet to support the launch of the 4K/Ultra HD Blu-ray format, engineers working on the technology have confided to *HCC* that Warner, along with Fox and Disney, will form the launch catalogue. It seems the future's going to be so bright, we really might need shades.

Doing a deal with the (Dare)devil

LG partners with Netflix to ensure UHD TV buyers have some 4K content

One of the big problems confronting anybody buying a new Ultra HD TV is the lack of native 4K content that is available to watch on it. While other TV manufacturers have attempted to placate buyers by offering hard drives loaded with a limited selection of films, LG is trying out a different approach via an alliance with online film and TV streaming service Netflix.

Until 29th July, 2015, anybody in the UK who purchases one of the brand's 13 compatible UHD TVs will be eligible for six months of Netflix Premium for free, granting access to the service's library of native 4K content – including exclusive material such as political thriller *House of Cards* and Marvel's new superhero series *Daredevil*. Netflix Premium UHD content is accessible via LG's webOS Smart TV platform and the offer is open to both new and existing Netflix members.

The full list of promotion-compatible LG UHD models comprises the EG960V, EF950V, EC980V, EC970V, EG920V, UF950V, UF940V, UF860V, UG870V, UF850V, UF830V, UF770V and JL9100. For further details visit www.lg.com/uk/netflix.



LG and Netflix are in cahoots!

Artcoustic™ Loudspeakers

AVTech media AWARDS 2014/15
BEST HIGH-END SPEAKER SYSTEM
ARTCOUSTIC
SPITFIRE SL

HOME CINEMA Choice
Reference Status



Cinema design, re-defined

"If you're serious about home cinema at the premium level then these need to be on your shortlist"

"The soundstage created is both wide and deep, able to involve you unhesitatingly in the onscreen action"

"The Artcoustic system has a handy knack of revelling in quiet periods, painting a sonic picture, before bursting into life with shocking dynamism"

Home Cinema Choice, May 2014

DOLBY ATMOS

Our UK Showroom is now fully upgraded to demonstrate Dolby Atmos



Spitfire 24-12 SL

Artcoustic Denmark:

DK SHOWROOM (by appointment only)
Tel: +45 32836060
artcoustic@artcoustic.com
www.artcoustic.com

Artcoustic UK and Eire:

UK SHOWROOM (by appointment only)
Tel: +44 (0)1245 400904
salesuk@artcoustic.com
www.artcoustic.com

follow us on Facebook facebook Twitter and Flickr flickr

DIARY

Our calendar ensures that you don't miss out...

→ MAY

08: Spooks: The Greater Good
The popular BBC One spy series makes the leap to the bigscreen. *Game of Thrones* star Kit Harrington takes the lead while Peter Firth returns as MI5 boss Harry Pearce.
www.fox.co.uk

13: Festival de Cannes
The 68th Cannes International Film Festival will be serving up 12 days of movie premieres, culminating in the awarding of the prestigious Palme d'Or for the best film.
www.festival-cannes.com



15: Mad Max: Fury Road
Tom Hardy steps into the role that made Mel Gibson a superstar for writer/director George Miller's fourth post-apocalyptic action film. Burn rubber down to your nearest multiplex to catch it!
www.warnerbros.co.uk

18: Mean Streets
Martin Scorsese's classic crime film finally makes its bow on Blu-ray in the UK, accompanied by a director's commentary and vintage featurette.
www.iconmovies.co.uk

22: Poltergeist 3D
Sam Rockwell and Jared Harris star in this stereoscopic remake of the iconic Tobe Hooper/Steven Spielberg 1982 chiller. Find out if the film really does 'know what you're afraid of' when it arrives at a cinema near you.
www.fox.co.uk

29: San Andreas



There's going to be a whole lot of shaking going on in multiplexes across the UK when this epic disaster flick pits Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson against a devastating earthquake.
www.warnerbros.co.uk

→ JUNE

01: Whiplash
Expect the air to turn particularly blue today as home cinemas across the UK play host to the abusive tirades of J.K. Simmons' music instructor when this award-winning drama hits DVD and Blu-ray.
www.sonypictures.co.uk

04: HCC #248
The next issue of your favourite home cinema magazine hits the stands, packed with hardware tests, features, outspoken opinion and in-depth software reviews.
www.homecinemachoice.com

Amazon targets internet TV

Blazing streaming stick leads the way, but HDR is close behind

Content delivery service Amazon is fast-tracking a range of AV technologies that it believes will put it in the driving seat when it comes to internet-delivered AV. From the roll-out of its highly powerful Fire TV stick to an early promise of High Dynamic Range (HDR) 4K content, the company is setting the agenda in the quick-moving world of online entertainment.

Amazon's Fire TV stick is aimed squarely at similar HDMI solutions from Roku and Google. The device features 1GB of onboard memory and 8GB of flash storage to hold apps and games (of which some 400 are available, both free and pay). In addition to Prime Instant Video, the platform supports Netflix, BBC iPlayer, Demand 5 and iTV Player but lacks All 4/4OD catch-up. The Prime service boasts in excess of 15,000 movie titles and TV episodes available to watch.

'When the Fire TV stick was launched in the US, it quickly became the best-selling Amazon product of all time,' spokesman Paul Woodmansey told *HCC*. 'We expect to sell a lot in the UK.'

When asked if the company was making a loss on the device, which retails for just £35, Woodmansey smiled, and noted: 'We obviously have our own, unique business model. Prime Instant Video is a key part of that.'

The blazing stick follows the release of the more fully-featured Fire TV box. Although the diminutive streaming box sells for roughly twice the price, there's no significant difference in the





Paul Woodmansey: 'When the Fire TV stick was launched in the US, it quickly became the fastest-selling Amazon product ever'

content offerings, at least in terms of streaming video content. 'The app and TV choice is the same,' explains Woodmansey. 'Where you will find a difference is the games selection. Unlike the Fire TV box, the stick has a dual-core, rather than quad-core processor. This means it can't render more complicated games effectively.'

'Some buyers compare Fire TV with Chromecast, but they're not really the same thing,' he adds. 'Chromecast relies on a mobile device for content. What we have here is a fully-functional set-top box service, in an HDMI stick. That's why it comes with its own remote control. People tell us that they like the fact that they don't have to use the Fire TV app to control it. Of course, if they do use the app they also get voice search.'

HDR to debut this year

Amazon Prime began a nascent streaming 4K service last year on a small selection of UHD screens. Now the company says it will debut HDR later this year. The first programmes to feature HDR will be its own Amazon original content. The company is working with Hollywood studios and consumer electronics companies to establish the tech.

However, Amazon was unable to clarify to *HCC* which HDR standard it would be adopting, or what it deemed an HDR-compatible screen brightness.

'It's very early days for 4K yet,' Woodmansey admitted. 'It's all too easy to forget just how long it's taken HD TV to become commonplace. Unlike our rival OTT service, we actually own a studio rather than buy in productions, and that means we are fully committed to 4K. That's why we're shooting all our own programmes in 4K. It also means that when we produce these shows, the creatives are fully involved in presentation and promotion. It's part of the deal.'

Amazon wouldn't be drawn on the possibility of a standalone 4K Fire TV box, although given the price point and mass adoption it's looking for, that's perhaps hardly surprising.



The Fire Stick comes with its own remote control

This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



News x10

1 D'oh! No more *Simpsons* DVDs

The Simpsons producer Al Jean has revealed that Twentieth Century Fox has pulled the plug on any further DVD or Blu-ray releases of the hit cartoon series, telling followers of his Twitter account: 'I personally am very sorry to see DVDs discontinued. We did them purely for the love of hearing ourselves talk'. This is the latest evidence that Fox is moving away from physical media releases for its TV shows, following last year's decision not to release new seasons of *Glee*, *Bones* and *The Americans* on Blu-ray.

2 Anthem for an AV legend

It's with great sadness that we have to report that Alan Roser, founder and MD of Anthem AV Solutions, has passed away at the age of 53 following a short battle with cancer. Members of Team HCC had the pleasure of meeting Alan many times over the years and his knowledge, enthusiasm and sense of humour will be sorely missed by the entire AV industry.

3 Good news/bad news

Samsung is forecasting 'encouraging' results for the first three months of 2015. The South Korean tech giant is predicting operating profits of 5.9 trillion won (£3.65bn) for the period – however, this still represents a fall in profit of more than 30 per cent from a year earlier.

4 Leaky *Thrones* upset HBO

HBO has confirmed that the first four episodes of the latest season of *Game of Thrones* were available to download illegally before the debut episode had even screened on TV. A statement from the company claims that it has traced the episodes to 'a group approved by HBO to receive them' and that it is 'actively assessing how this breach occurred.'

5 Spotify now on PlayStation

Spotify is finally available on PS3 and PS4 via PlayStation Music, which has replaced Sony's Music Unlimited Service. In addition, Sony has confirmed that PlayStation Music will support both premium and ad-free Spotify accounts.

6 2014: A landmark year for digital music sales

The latest Digital Music Report from industry body IFPI claims that global sales of digital music (downloads and streaming) equaled those of physical formats for the first time ever in 2014. According to the IFPI, each sector accounted for 46 per cent of sales (maybe the other 8 per cent was people shoplifting...), while the industry's overall global revenues were largely unchanged at £10.14bn.

7 BBC aims for 4K in 2016

BBC Chief Technology Officer Matthew Postgate has told the *Financial Times* that he expects the BBC to be broadcasting TV programmes in 4K as standard by 2016. Presumably this would be the same BBC that still can't manage to broadcast local news in bog-standard Full HD...

8 Frightening partnership

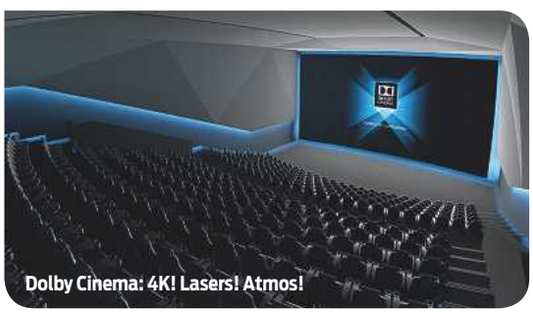
Icon Film Distribution has entered into an exclusive deal with the UK's leading horror film festival FrightFest to release a range of specially curated films under the 'FrightFest Presents' banner.

9 Sly targets Halifax pirate

Sylvester Stallone has offered his thanks to officers from the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) following the arrest of a man from Halifax on charges of leaking films, including *The Expendables 3*, online. 'I'd like to thank PIPCU for working with US Homeland Security Investigations... It is important to protect the rights of creatives around the world from theft,' growled Sly.

10 Laser-powered cinema

Following a debut in the Netherlands last December, the Dolby Cinema experience is coming to the US in a partnership with cinema chain AMC. Dolby Cinema will be available in four major cities by mid-May, with a total of 15 sites planned before the year's end. The deal combines AMC's Prime large format theatres (including vibrating seating) with Dolby Atmos audio and Dolby Vision utilising dual 4K laser projectors.



Dolby Cinema: 4K! Lasers! Atmos!

Premiere

What's happening in the world of TV and films...

Jenkins is Wonder-ful

It's all change in the director's chair on the upcoming *Wonder Woman* film. Michelle MacLaren has left the project citing 'creating differences', with *Monster* director Patty Jenkins taking the reins in her place.

Super-sized superheroes



It looks like the Russo Brothers will be following the Chris Nolan visual playbook with *Captain America: Civil War*. The three-quel will be the first Marvel movie to feature IMAX footage, with roughly 15 minutes of material shot using a brand-new 2D digital IMAX/Arri camera.

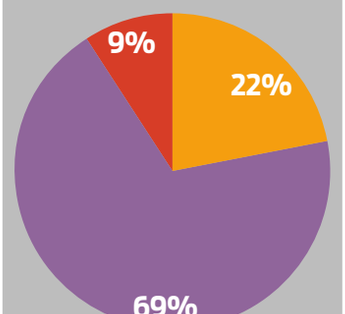
Disney loves live-action

Buoyed by the recent box office success of *Cinderella*, Disney is ramping up production of a series of live-action adaptations of its classic cartoons. Remakes of *Winnie the Pooh*, *Mulan*, *Pinocchio* and *Dumbo* will soon be joining the live-action versions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Jungle Book* that have already started filming.

We asked...

Do you currently have a Netflix subscription?

- Yes!
- No!
- I'm planning to get one



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Geriaction man...

Taken 3: Extended Harder Cut → Twentieth Century Fox → All-region BD & R2 DVD

Former CIA operative Bryan Mills (Liam Neeson) is forced to rely on his 'particular set of skills' once again after being accused of the brutal murder of his ex-wife (Famke Janssen). While this third entry in the popular action franchise landed at UK cinemas with a '12' certificate, the upcoming Blu-ray release promises a slightly more grown up experience when it hits shelves on June 15, thanks to the inclusion of an 'Extended Harder Cut' of the movie. A deleted scene and three behind-the-scenes featurettes make up the hi-def platter's bonus goodies.








Canton DM50

Now available in Glass topped Black, White and Silver

AVTech media AWARDS 2014/15 BEST SOUNDBASE CANTON DM 50

Trusted Reviews Awards 2014 Best Soundbar

"Performance is excellent"
HOME CINEMA CHOICE

"A lesson in what a soundbase should sound and look like"
WHAT HIFI

"Hands down the best sounding soundbase on the market"
TRUSTED REVIEWS

TRANSFORM YOUR SOUND WITH AN AWARD-WINNING CANTON SOUNDBASE

Canton DM75

Available in Black, White and Silver



Trusted Reviews RECOMMENDED

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2014 Soundbars & soundbases

"Canton's super-sized soundbase makes movie night unmissable with killer sound quality"
TRUSTED REVIEWS

"Canton has come up trumps with the DM 75. Clearer, bigger and more powerful sounding"
WHAT HIFI

"Reaches a level of sophistication you simply don't expect from a soundbase"
HOME CINEMA CHOICE

CANTON®

Available now from leading stockists including SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION amazon.co.uk richersounds BIGGEST BRANDS, BEST PRICES, EXPERT ADVICE! John Lewis

WIN

AN SVS PRIME 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE WORTH £1,050



UP FOR GRABS in our competition this issue is the Prime 5.1 system, the newest addition to legendary American speaker brand SVS's home audio stable. The perfect partner to largescreen HD visuals, this package typically retails for around £1,050. But thanks to UK distributor Karma AV, it could be yours for free!

Premium proposition

A sub/sat system, the Prime 5.1 uses a quintet of SVS's new Prime Satellite speakers. These are the most compact speakers the company makes, yet are designed to still deliver a deceptively large sound.

Each incorporates two drivers. The 1in tweeter is an aluminium dome design, both light and rigid. A Finite-Element-Analysis (FEA)-optimized diffuser works to improve on-axis and off-axis frequency response, ensuring everyone in your listening room gets the best performance.

Accompanying the tweeter is a 4.5in polypropylene midbass driver. Various mounting technologies, including an all-new cast ABS/fibreglass basket and aluminium shorting rings, work to reduce distortion and resonances, while a vented voice coil keeps the motor assembly cool during high-volume playback. The cabinet is rear-ported for improved bass extension.

To handle the LFE channel, SVS pairs the five Prime Satellite speakers with its SB-1000 sealed subwoofer. This cube-shaped bass bin only measures 13in across, yet still packs a 12in driver, married to a 300W Sledge amplifier, and promises lightning-fast transitions, deep distortion-free bass and a performance suited to both movies and music.

This smallscale but high-performance system provides flexible installation options – each satellite comes with a wall-mounting bracket, plus additional bumper feet to decouple it if it's placed on a flat surface. And with the speakers measuring just 8.75in high, accommodating them in your cinema room or media den is easy.

Wanna win it? Then enter our competition!



For more information on SVS's speakers and home cinema subwoofers visit:
www.karma-av.co.uk

To be in with a chance of winning the SVS Prime 5.1 speaker pack simply answer the following film-related question:

Q: Optimus Prime is a character in which robot-filled movie franchise?

A) Short Circuit

B) Star Wars

C) Transformers

HOW TO ENTER:

Simply email your answer (either A, B or C) to **competitions@homecinemachoice.com** with the subject line 'SVS'. You must include your name, address and contact telephone number.

The closing date for this competition is June 11, 2015. Please read the terms and conditions (below) before sending in your entry.



'These compact speakers from SVS are designed to still deliver a large, detailed sound – the perfect partner to your HD visuals'

Competition rules

1. The first entry drawn at random will win the prize. **2.** Only one entry per person/household; multiple entries will be discarded. **3.** Employees of MyTimeMedia Ltd and companies supplying competition prizes are not eligible to enter this competition. **4.** Please ensure your personal details are correct, as they will be used to contact you if you win. **5.** No alternatives, cash or otherwise, will be offered to the winner as prizes. **6.** The editor's decision is final. **7.** The closing date for entries is June 11, 2015.

What's in the future for Freeview?

Freeview has announced a new connected TV service dubbed Freeview Play. **Ian Calcutt** looks at the reasons behind the launch – and other big changes that are about to affect digital TV



MAIN IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREY_L



ON 24 OCTOBER 2012 Northern Ireland switched off its analogue TV transmissions. It was the last area of the UK to do so as part of a process carried out across the nation, region by region, over four years. If by then you didn't have a digital TV or set-top box (of any flavour) you got a blank screen. Parts of the airwaves were cleared, auctioned to mobile operators – 4G mobile broadband soon made its debut. Other spare parts of the terrestrial broadcasting spectrum were used for an expanded lineup of Freeview HD channels.

As far as most TV viewers are concerned everything now looks like it's in a stable situation. By the end of this decade, however, another chunk of spectrum is due to be sold off for mobile data, reducing Freeview's capacity by 30 per cent. Just at a time when manufacturers are producing next-generation 4K/Ultra HD TV sets, Freeview could struggle to even keep the same number of conventional HD channels that it has now, unless consumers adopt new technology.

TV for the masses

A quick tech recap may be necessary here. In contrast to satellite or cable TV, Freeview uses the UHF airwaves, with signals broadcast from a network of land-based transmitters. These digital terrestrial television (DTT) signals are within reach of 98.5 per cent of UK homes and are used by 19m households. For about 40 per cent of UK telly addicts, it's the only way they watch live TV. DTT also features heavily as the default for secondary TVs in kitchens and bedrooms, even in households with Sky or Virgin Media subscriptions. Therefore, what happens to Freeview over the next few years is a big deal for viewers, as well as the government and Ofcom, which regulates both broadcasting and telecoms.

A range of spectrum known as the 800MHz band was reallocated to 4G mobile data in the UK in 2013. Those services are still rolling out but there is international pressure for more airwaves to be cleared for mobile data. In November 2014 Ofcom announced that the 700MHz band will be reallocated after the end of this decade. International agreements will be made at the next World Radiocommunications Conference in November. Some factions want to go further and clear the 600MHz band, leaving even less space for DTT, but that may be resisted by countries such as the UK for the time being.

Terrestrial TV's part of the spectrum is divided into multiplexes (muxes for short), each containing groups of channels. Half of the HD channels available at the moment use one of two 'interim' muxes created after the digital switchover (one remains spare). However, these muxes will get the chop when the 700MHz band is cleared. Channels can be moved into different places but only if enough capacity remains.

It's an issue that creates uncertainty. Jon Steel is Director of Communications for Digital UK, the company that provides operational support for the DTT platform. 'The reduction will require the interim multiplexes – COM7 and COM8 – to be discontinued,' he says. 'Exactly how this will affect >

the overall line-up of services is unknown at this stage, particularly given continued advancements in compression and broadcast technologies.'

Most of the UK's DTT muxes use the DVB-T transmission standard, with data encoded in MPEG-2 format, but HD channels (and a smattering of standard-definition ones) use the newer DVB-T2 and MPEG-4. This allows more efficient use of bandwidth, hence its suitability for HD. All Freeview HD-compatible TVs and set-top boxes use DVB-T2. As spectrum shrinks, one suggestion is to use DVB-T2 more widely so that the number of HD channels can continue and grow.

A difficulty is that not all TV equipment is DVB-T2-compatible. Ofcom reports that it may be up to 80 per cent by the year 2022 but that leaves a sizeable minority and doesn't count secondary TVs, which are replaced less frequently.

'There may well be a push toward DVB-T2,' Graham North, Commercial Director of set-top box and PVR stalwart Humax, told me. 'However, a change to DVB-T2 is not an easy decision to be made. It is like another digital switchover.'

Meanwhile Tim Jenks, Senior Executive at the Confederation of Aerial Industries, says there could be problems convincing people to change reception equipment if they haven't already upgraded. 'This creates even more confusion in a British public that really don't care as long as their favourite programmes are viewable. They have no idea about DVB-T2 or MPEG-4. Most folk are watching the programme, not the pixel count.'

And Digital UK exec Jon Steel observes that while Ofcom has stated that it doesn't believe a migration to DVB-T2 will be necessary to maintain its objectives for coverage or channel line-up following a clearance of 700MHz, 'a migration to more spectrally efficient technologies should not be ruled out.'



Ofcom says DTT services will continue until at least 2030

Among those technologies is HEVC (High Efficiency Video Coding). The successor to MPEG-4, it uses about half the bandwidth and has enabled quality upgrades such as 4K (and 8K) Ultra HD TV to become feasible. In March 2015 the Digital TV Group (DTG) issued the eighth edition of its D-Book, which lays down digital TV technical specifications and guidelines. 'In D-Book 8 we've included a recommendation to ensure that manufacturers that are putting HEVC in their televisions – for the likes of Netflix and on-demand services – have those sets enabled for broadcast HEVC services as well to try and help minimise that legacy going into the market,' says Simon Gauntlett, the DTG's Chief Technical Officer. At the turn of the decade, he suggests the process will be to squeeze DTT services into the remaining spectrum. 'There are discussions about what is next on the roadmap – when does HEVC become a possibility to migrate some services to that and get even more efficiency?'

Next-generation connection

Another key development is the increasing use of broadband to deliver TV content, either as live streaming or for catch-up viewing and video-on-demand. The industry lumps this together under the acronym of IPTV (internet protocol television), often shortened to just IP.

'There are things you can do to deliver some services via broadcast and some services via IP,' says Gauntlett, 'and actually the consumer doesn't really care how it gets to them.'

The battle for the 4K broadcast future

Netflix has led the 4K content charge, but satellite advocates promise better quality thanks to higher bitrates

The general industry consensus is that those with 4K screens awaiting broadcast material should be looking to the skies, or their broadband router, rather than their Freeview hardware. Terrestrial spectrum is lacking, and the DTG admits it still has work to do with vanilla HD before it can consider extra resolution. 'I don't think people are pushing for that,' says Simon Gauntlett. 'We haven't migrated the platform properly to HD, so the priority would have to be HD at this stage.'

IP delivery could be the way forward, with the increase in broadband speeds across the UK opening up the possibility of 4K content shunted down the pipe. Yet currently it is only on-demand services, such as Netflix and Amazon, that are providing material – the days of the ITV Player offering UHD streams are a way off. And the compression technology is crucial. 'The biggest focus in this area is HEVC,' says Carl Hibbert, an Associate Director at Futuresource Consulting. 'The major issue is still bandwidth constraints on delivering 4K quality. 15Mbps is considered the minimum requirement for 4K delivery but in reality consumers will require even higher bandwidth.'



UHD via satellite, which can hit higher bitrates, could therefore be the saviour. 'It's the best product for getting to many people with the same product in one go,' says Mike Chandler, MD of Astra UK, whose fleet is used by Sky and Freesat. 'You can broadcast UHD on anything as long as you've got the bandwidth [but] it's going be a big challenge for terrestrial and I think for IPTV as well. Netflix calls it UHD but it's very heavily compressed. It's not the same as our test channels; that's more like what we hope the broadcasters will be putting out.'

He adds that the broadcasting industry must 'get away from the idea of switchovers and behave more like they do in the IP world – where things change and you need new software or a new device to be able to support it. So if you're losing stuff on DTT you could top it up with services over IP. This is part of that evolution towards a proper connected television that has the ability to get the best out of the inputs that it's got and find better ways of delivering services to the viewers.'

> 'Freeview Play has been designed at the outset to give viewers a range of products and prices, says Digital UK'

To date, on Freeview, this has been managed using MHEG 'portals' such as Connect TV and VuTV that access additional internet channels with compatible set-top boxes or TVs.

YouView, the platform that launched in 2012 after a two-year delay, intended to unify IPTV services with Freeview's DTT channels in a user-friendly way. Although standalone YouView hardware could be bought without a contract, after the first 12 months it was reported that 97 per cent of YouView users got their boxes through BT or TalkTalk subscriptions (both companies help fund the YouView venture).

Having learned from the YouView experience, the broadcasters behind Freeview have announced Freeview Play, along with new branding for the DTT platform. Freeview Play goes back to the drawing board and combines digital channels with the BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, All4 (formerly 4oD) and Demand 5, plus scope for future on-demand additions.

Its technical development is managed by Digital UK. Says Jon Steel: 'The launch of Freeview Play will bring the full benefits of connected TV, including catch-up TV and a scroll-back EPG, to the mass market. It is designed to make it as easy as possible for viewers to seamlessly access broadcast and on-demand content without subscription.'

Unlike YouView, Freeview Play is based on an open HTML5 user interface and the HbbTV (Hybrid Broadcast Broadband TV) interactive standard used widely in Europe, including by the successful Freetime system adopted by Freesat since 2012.

'We're acknowledging the fact that the rest of the world has gone with an HTML-based platform, largely around HbbTV,' says Simon Gauntlett. 'It's helping us deliver a proposition which is easier for manufacturers, and it's going to provide better services ultimately.'

Freeview Play differs from YouView in a number of other ways. It uses the Freeview brand, which is well known to viewers and manufacturers, and 'light-touch technical guidelines' provide a consistent viewer experience while allowing manufacturers to build on existing designs with other new features. It has been designed from the outset to give viewers a range of products and prices, claims Digital UK.

Indeed, Freeview Play hardware has already been announced by Panasonic, Humax, Seiki and Vestel, with others expected soon. Humax is also a YouView supporter, but Graham North explained the lure of Freeview Play: '[It] will have more appeal to the large consumer electronics manufacturers as it can be based on their own operating systems. It will also play more to the general retail market as there can be more innovative manufacturer features. Freeview can continue to innovate and the launch of the Freeview Play platform will be a major area that we expect to see growth. It is the main reason that Humax has invested in launching the first Freeview Play PVR.'

Still going strong

While it's easy to imagine a future of IP-delivered telly, and catch-up and on-demand are buzzwords for the industry, traditional live viewing continues to dominate, with the latest figures from Ofcom indicating that approximately 90 per cent of viewing is still to linear TV, with the remainder split between things that have been recorded from broadcast and on-demand content, according to Digital UK.

It's also worth remembering the complexity of getting increasingly higher-resolution video to large numbers of viewers simultaneously via broadband. As the DTG's Simon Gauntlett points out: 'IP services are definitely not replacing broadcast services because broadcasting is still the most efficient way of delivering content to the masses, by a long way.'

The rate of change in broadcasting is slow because each move affects millions of homes. Eventually all DTT spectrum may give way to wireless internet, enabling space-efficient transmission of video to mobiles and household TVs alongside other data. But in a 2014 discussion document, Ofcom said: 'We do not currently expect a full switch-off of DTT until post 2030.'

So, there's no need to get rid of Freeview gear yet. Just expect to upgrade once or twice in the mean time, or it could be blank screens all over again ■



TV habits are changing with the success of on-demand platforms

HOME CINEMA Choice SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

DIRECT DEBIT SUBSCRIPTIONS *UK ONLY*

Yes, I would like to subscribe to *Home Cinema Choice*

☐ *Print + Digital*: £12.74 every 3 months
(**SAVE 32%** on shop price + **SAVE 74%** on Digital Download + **FREE GIFT**)

☐ *Print*: £10.49 every 3 months (**SAVE 32%** on shop price + **FREE GIFT**)

YOUR DETAILS *MUST BE COMPLETED*

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....

Address .....

.....

Postcode ..... Country .....

Tel ..... Mobile.....

Email ..... D.O.B .....

I WOULD LIKE TO SEND A GIFT TO:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....

Address .....

.....

Postcode ..... Country .....

INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR BANK/BUILDING SOCIETY

Originator's reference 422562

DIRECT Debit

Name of bank.....

Address of bank.....

.....

..... Postcode .....

Account holder.....

Signature..... Date .....

Sort code Account number

Instructions to your bank or building society: Please pay MyTimeMedia Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with MyTimeMedia Ltd and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Reference Number (official use only)

Please note that banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account.

CARD PAYMENTS & OVERSEAS

Yes, I would like to subscribe to *Home Cinema Choice*, for 1 year (13 issues) with a one-off payment

UK ONLY:

☐ *Print + Digital*: £53.49
(SAVE 28% on shop price + SAVE 74% on Digital + FREE GIFT)

☐ *Print*: £44.49 (SAVE 28% on shop price + FREE GIFT)

EUROPE & ROW:

☐ *EU Print + Digital:* £72.00

☐ *EU Print:* £63.00

☐ *ROW Print + Digital:* £74.00

☐ *ROW Print:* £65.00

PAYMENT DETAILS

☐ Postal Order/Cheque ☐ Visa/MasterCard ☐ Maestro

Please make cheques payable to MyTimeMedia Ltd and write code V723 on the back

Cardholder's name.....

Card no: (Maestro)

Valid from..... Expiry date..... Maestro issue no.....

Signature..... Date.....

Offer ends 4th June 2015. MyTimeMedia Ltd & Home Cinema Choice may contact you with information about our other products and services. If you DO NOT wish to be contacted by MyTimeMedia Ltd & Home Cinema Choice please tick here: ❑ Email ❑ Post ❑ Phone. If you DO NOT wish to be contacted by carefully chosen 3rd parties, please tick here: ❑ Post ❑ Phone. If you wish to be contacted by email by carefully chosen 3rd parties, please tick here: ❑ Email

POST THIS FORM TO: HOME CINEMA CHOICE SUBSCRIPTIONS, TOWER HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PARK, MARKET HARBOROUGH, LEICS LE16 9EF

Please visit **www.homecinemachoice.com/terms** for full terms & conditions **CODE V723**



PRINT + DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION

Free One For All Xsight Lite remote worth £29.99*

13 issues *delivered to your door*

Save up to *32% off the shop price*

Download each new issue to your device

A *74% discount* on your Digital subscription

Access your subscription on *multiple devices*

Access to the *Online Archive* dating back to August 2011



PRINT SUBSCRIPTION

Free One For All Xsight Lite remote worth £29.99*

13 issues *delivered to your door*

Save up to *32% off the shop price*

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Receive a *One For All*™ *Xsight Lite remote** when you subscribe today

WORTH £29.99*



'Control up to six of your devices'



SAVE **32%**** ON THE SHOP PRICE & **74%** ON DIGITAL

If you don't want to compromise on functionality or convenience, a universal remote from One For All's Xsight series is ideal. The Xsight Lite combines elegance, ergonomic simplicity, state-of-the-art technology and ease-of-use, with its colour touchscreen enabling quick navigation. You can make the remote work exactly the way you want it to by personalising commands and setting favourite channels and one-touch activities (such as Watch Movie). Up to six devices (ranging from your TV and projector to your set-top box and AVR) can be controlled, with One For All's database covering more than 300,000 products and the Xsight Lite guaranteed to work with all brands. Check out www.oneforall.co.uk for more info.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Offer ends 4th June 2015. *UK Direct Debit offer only. Please see www.homecinemachoice.com/terms for full terms & conditions.

SUBSCRIBE SECURELY ONLINE
www.subscription.co.uk/hccl/v723

CALL OUR ORDER LINE
0844 543 8200 (quote ref V723)
Lines open weekdays 8am – 9.30pm & Saturday 8am – 4pm

BT landline calls to 0844 numbers will cost no more than 5p per minute. Calls from mobiles usually cost more.



Battle Beyond the Stars **packs in a galaxy's worth of sci-fi fun**

THE 50 BEST B MOVIES

ON BLU-RAY & DVD

Team HCC sorts through its disc collection to find the low-budget sci-fis, schlocky horrors and blockbuster rip-offs that are definitely worthy of a run-out on a Friday night

A-LIST MOVIES WITH A-list casts and A-list production values are the backbone of Hollywood, and guaranteed to get your home cinema system singing at its sweetest. But with hundreds of flicks churned out each year, there's so much more to choose from than the major studio titles. And this is where B movies come in.

The name denotes their original status as the supporting feature in a cinematic double-bill, with the 'B movie' delivered on a tighter budget than the more prestigious top-liner. Production exploded in the post-silent era, with fan-pleasing genres (Westerns, horror, noir) making up the bulk of the output. And even when the double-bill model faded, the idea of the B movie had taken hold. Low-cost genre flicks, produced outside of the big studios' spheres, could turn huge profits, and the ideas kept coming – sci-fi and exploitation joined the B movie repertoire. More recently, the home media revolution created another path for independent studios to reach their audience.

Of course, there are plenty of B movies that are practically unwatchable, but many gems, too. Here we pick our 50 favourites...



American Ninja

Cannon Films hit a gold-mine in the 1980s with a succession of low-cost bruisers, and *American Ninja* (originally renamed *American Warrior* in the UK) was a big enough hit to spawn a franchise. Star Michael Dudikoff is no Jackie Chan, but there's enough sword-swirling scrappery and exploding helicopters here to satisfy your action tastebuds. Made its HD debut last month, courtesy of 88 Films.



The Attack of the 50ft Woman

One of the most recognisable B movie titles around (anyone viewing the poster knew exactly what they were in for), this 1958 sci-fi manages to remain eminently watchable despite some very low-budget special effects and wide-eyed acting as Allison Hayes goes on a super-sized rampage. No Blu-ray release yet, sadly.



Battle Beyond the Stars

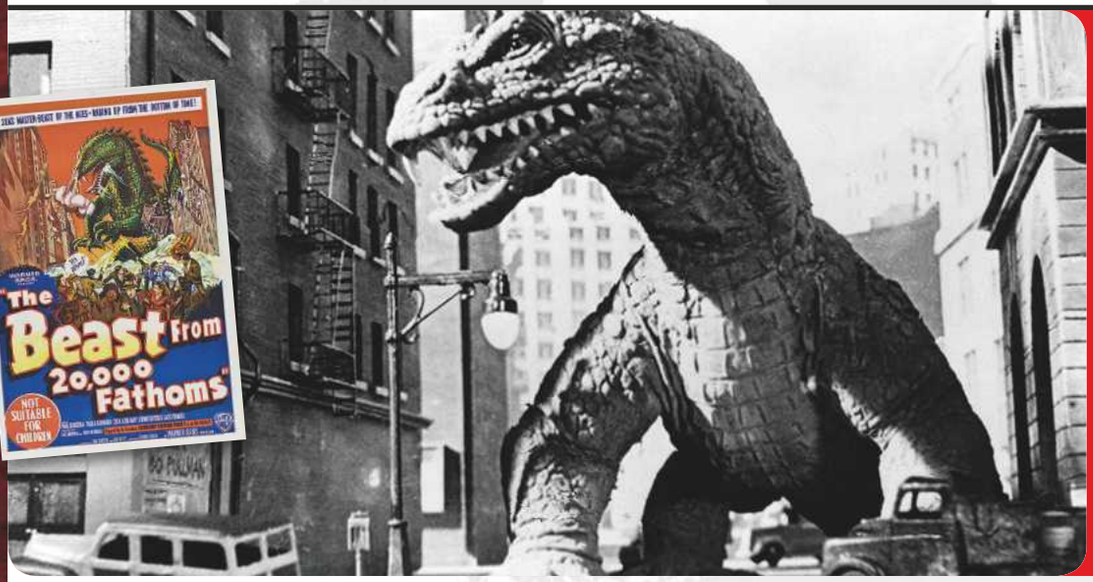
Given the impact *Star Wars* had on the landscape for low-budget sci-fi (see p28), it was only fitting that Roger Corman should cash-in on its success with his biggest production so far – a sci-fi remake of *The Magnificent Seven*. With special effects by James Cameron and Sybil Danning as a buxom space Valkyrie, it's a blast from start to finish and available on a well-spec'd Region A Blu-ray.



Basket Case

Frank Henenlotter's Skid Row shocker follows two 'Siamese twins' out for revenge on the doctors who separated them. As well as their mental state, the pun-tastic title also refers to the fact that one of the twins, Belial, is little more than a murderous lump of teeth and claws that his brother Duane carries around in a wicker basket. Henenlotter's icky flick is available alongside its two sequels in a UK BD steelbook.

>



The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms

Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion animation mastery ensures this 1953 monster movie didn't sink without a trace, and its aquatic-beast-woken-by-a-nuclear-explosion narrative served as the inspiration for *Godzilla* the following year. This is 80 mins of B movie fun, and surely due a Blu-ray release soon – at present, DVD is your best option.



Blacula

The blaxploitation fad of the '70s spilled into the horror genre with titles like *Blackenstein* and *Dr. Black and Mr. Hyde*. Best of the bunch was 1972's *Blacula*, which somehow mixed racially-charged social commentary with horror, comedy and funk music into a coherent whole – thanks largely to William Marshall's dignified performance as an African prince cursed by Dracula to be one of the undead. Grab it on Blu-ray alongside its sequel.



The Big Doll House

Lesbians! Sadistic guards! Mud wrestling! Director Jack Hill's legendary 'women in prison' flick features all this and more as it follows six inmates as they use their feminine wiles to try and escape from a tropical prison. The affordable US *Women in Cages Collection* Blu-ray partners this 1971 exploitation classic with the same year's *Women in Cages* and 1972's *The Big Bird Cage*.



The Blob

More 1950s sci-fi frolics, with smalltown USA forced to fight a giant, expanding blob that's hitchhiked to Earth inside a meteor. *The Blob* was a bona fide B movie (billed alongside *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*), a massive hit (it grossed over $4m from a budget of around $100,000) and eventually spawned a sequel and 1988 remake. Oh, and it gave Steve McQueen his cinema debut.



Blood feast

Young women are being murdered by a nutty caterer in 'Godfather of Gore' Herschell Gordon Lewis's notorious 1963 splatter flick. While the onscreen gore was groundbreaking at the time, it all looks pretty hokey these days – which only gives this wonderfully inept film greater camp appeal. The all-region US *Blood Trilogy* BD also includes the director's *Two Thousand Maniacs* and *Color Me Blood Red*.



Cat People

Working for RKO in the 1940s, producer Val Lewton was given a list of pre-approved titles and meagre resources to turn them into films. But instead of the expected lurid horror quickies, Lewton concocted a series of trailblazing psychological shockers including this timeless classic. Criminally unavailable on BD, nine Lewton films were released as an R1 DVD boxset.



Coffy

Following a handful of 'chicks in chains' flicks (including *The Big Doll House* – see above), Pam Grier finally hit it big with this tale of a nurse who spends her nights getting revenge on the drug dealers who put her little sister in hospital. Sexy, sassy and shocking, this blaxploitation stalwart recently made its BD debut courtesy of Arrow Video.



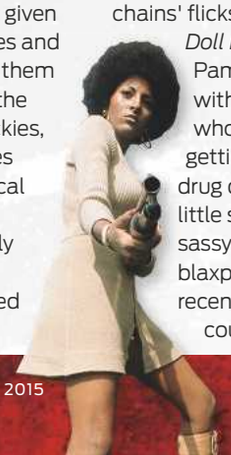
Crank

A film about a foul-mouthed hoodlum (Jason Statham) who has to keep his adrenaline pumping to stave off a deadly drug was never going to be an A-grade production, so writer/director duo Neveldine/Taylor wallow in the B movie madness of *Crank*'s premise, shooting on low-budget handheld HD cams, and littering the 88-minute running time with gaming gags, odd captions and brutal violence.



Cyborg

Post-apocalyptic 1989 martial arts mayhem with Jean Claude Van Damme. Confusingly, the Muscles from Brussels isn't playing a cyborg – instead he's a hard-as-nails mercenary escorting a cyborg on a journey through a plague-savaged US – but director Albert Pyun isn't about to let that get in the way of a good title. Enjoyable budget fun with a bit of a *Mad Max*-vibe, and the US BD looks good, too.





Deadly Weapons

Exotic dancer Chesty Morgan made the leap to the bigscreen with this revenge flick. Making ample use of her best assets, *Deadly Weapons* casts Chesty as a woman tackling the mobsters who killed her boyfriend – which she does by seducing them and smothering them with, er... we'll leave that to your imagination. Available as part of the Region A-locked *Chesty Morgan's Bosom Buddies* triple-feature BD.



Death Race 2000

Another Roger Corman-produced drive-in classic, this gleefully violent future sports film stars David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone as rival drivers in the Transcontinental Road Race, where bonus points are awarded for mowing down innocent bystanders. Much more fun (if not quite as spectacular) as the Jason Statham remake, the film can be picked up on a Region A Blu-ray.



Dementia 13

Made in Ireland with money left over from the production of 1963's *The Young Racers*, this horror cheapie about an axe-wielding lunatic carving his way through a rich family marked the 'legitimate' directorial debut of Francis Ford Coppola. This arguably gives the film more cache than it really deserves, but it's still fascinating to see Coppola developing his craft. An insanely cheap All-region BD can be found in the US.



The Evil Dead

What is there left to say about Sam Raimi's audacious debut? Shot on a miniscule budget by Raimi and his friends and championed by Stephen King, this riotous gore-fest gained true notoriety during the Video Nasties furore that rocked the UK during the 1980s, cementing its place in the heart of horror fans. Although the UK BD is packed with extras, the beautifully restored transfer is cropped from 4:3 to 1.85:1.



The Fall of the House of Usher

Roger Corman's baroque 1960 Cinemascope chiller was a hit at the box office and kicked off a cycle of Edgar Allan Poe-inspired films that finally made critics sit up and pay attention to this upstart filmmaker. *The Fall of the House of Usher* is available as both a standalone Region B BD and as part of the lavish limited edition *Vincent Price in Six Gothic Tales by Edgar Allan Poe* boxset.



Feast

The winner of the third series of US TV show *Project Greenlight* (a competition designed to give first-time filmmakers a chance to direct a feature film), this no-holds-barred creature-feature pits a bar full of genre archetypes (identified onscreen as 'Hero', 'Boss Man', etc.) against a horde of unstoppable monsters. *Feast* is a great, gory throwback to 80s splatter flicks – just don't bother with the two terrible sequels.

Listen to the Band

Saluting the king of modern B movie horror





For over four decades now Charles Band has been feeding film fans a steady diet of schlocky sci-fi and goofy horror with titles like *Laserblast*, *Creepozoids*, *Slave Girls from Beyond Infinity* and *The Gingerdead Man*.

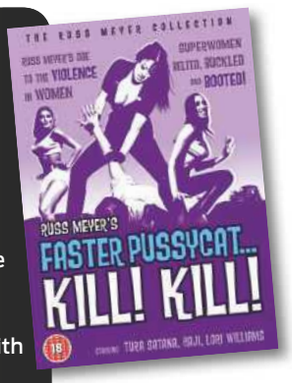
During the 1980s, Band's Empire Pictures became a prolific mini-major, even if it didn't quite meet his original promise of '2,000 movies by the year 2000!'. Following the collapse of Empire at the end of the '80s, Band went on to create the successful Full Moon brand, which is still going strong today with a host of direct-to-video franchises including *Puppet Master*, *Trancers*, *Demonic Toys* and *Evil Bong*.





Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

Sexploitation auteur Russ Meyer's surprisingly restrained and unforgettable masterpiece follows the outrageous exploits of three psychotic (and, as always with Meyer, particularly buxom) go-go dancers. The old R2 DVD (pictured) includes chat tracks by Meyer and the Pussycats!



A NEW HOPE FOR SCI-FI

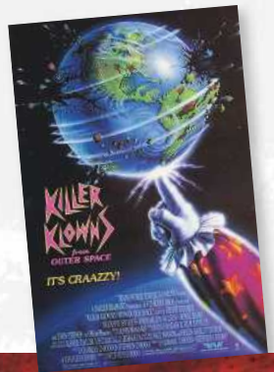
Why *Star Wars* brought the A-game to outer space...





Until the release of *Star Wars* in 1977, pulp sci-fi was viewed almost exclusively as B movie fodder. Then, almost overnight, it all changed. As far as the Hollywood majors were concerned, in the wake of the global box office success of *Star Wars*, B movies were the new A movies.

Yet the likes of Roger Corman and Charles Band simply couldn't compete with the vast piles of money that studios were throwing at sci-fi flicks like *Alien* and *...The Empire Strikes Back*. Salvation arrived with the advent of home video, as the cautious approach taken by the majors left the door wide open for B movie filmmakers to find a new and appreciative audience for their low-budget genre flicks.



Grindhouse

Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez's loving homage to the 'grindhouse' cinemas that once specialised in showing exploitation double-bills gets everything spot-on, right down to the missing reels and scratched prints. Extended cuts of the two films are available separately on Blu-ray, as is the original *Grindhouse* double-bill complete with the full complement of *faux* trailers.





Hell comes to Frogtown

When a nuclear war leaves humanity facing extinction due to widespread infertility, nomadic drifter Sam Hell (pro wrestler 'Rowdy' Roddy Piper) is sent to rescue a harem of fertile women from the slimy grasp of mutant frog people. As mad as a bag of frogs, this dumb-but-fun post-apocalyptic action-comedy made a surprise appearance as a limited edition Blu-ray last year.



Hollywood chainsaw hookers

Proud possessor of one of the all-time great B movie titles, Fred Olen Ray's BBFC-bothering slice of schlock is a fun homage to the great film noirs, albeit featuring killer prostitutes belonging to an ancient Egyptian chainsaw-worshiping cult. The restored UK Blu-ray ensures that horror icons Linnea Quigley and Michelle Bauer have never looked better.



Iron Sky

Arriving four years after its teaser trailer became the talk of the town at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, *Iron Sky* deals with an invasion by lunar Nazis who have been hiding on the moon since the end of World War II. Both the original theatrical cut and a longer 'Dictator's Cut' of this sci-fi spoof have seen the light of day on Blu-ray, and a crowdfunded sequel (with added Nazi dinosaurs) is in the works.



Killer Klowns from Outer Space

Need proof that clowns are inherently evil? Then look no further than The Chiodo Brothers' 1988 sci-fi comedy. Taking its cues from '50s sci-fi movies like *The Blob*, it finds smalltown America under attack from alien clowns. Following its success on VHS, DVD and BD, a sequel entitled *Return of the Killer Klowns from Outer Space in 3D* is in the works.



King Kong Escapes

Having fought Godzilla in 1962, King Kong's second Japanese adventure saw the giant ape do battle with the giant robot Mechani-Kong and its creator Dr. Who (no, not that one). This classic example of so-bad-it's-good cinema is a must for fans of men in monster suits monkeying around in model cities. Universal released a barebones All-region Blu-ray in the States last year.



Kiss Me Deadly

Loosely based on one of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer mystery novels, director Robert Aldrich's nihilistic 1957 thriller took the film noir to new depths of paranoia, brutality and cynicism, before climaxing with one of the most audacious finales imaginable. It's worth buying a multi-region deck just so you can enjoy Criterion's Region A-locked Blu-ray with its gorgeous HD visuals and ample assortment of bonus features. >



GOLD SERIES

40 YEARS OF DESIGN INNOVATION DEDICATED TO YOU

NEW GOLD: PURER BY DESIGN

Purer and more bewitching than ever, our latest Gold range refines the technology of its award-winning GX predecessor to set a new gold standard for our celebrated high-end speaker line.

monitoraudio.com

MONITOR AUDIO

REL ACOUSTICS LTD

212/SE



Quality Meets Quantity

“THE REL 212/SE IS ACTUALLY GOOD VALUE. FOR THIS LEVEL OF OUTPUT YOU CAN PAY A LOT MORE. IT IS SUMPTUOUS TO LOOK AT, BEAUTIFULLY MADE AND WILL BOTH FRIGHTEN AND IMPRESS YOUR GUESTS. AUDITION ONE.” | *ADAM RAYNER, HOME CINEMA CHOICE*

Join the Pursuit™

rel.net

Experience the 212SE’s Twin long-stroke 12" Continuous Cast™ Alloy Bass Engines and dual 12" passives
Visit **rel.net** to learn more about REL and find an authorized dealer near you.



Ms. 45

Underground New York filmmaker Abel Ferrara followed up 1979's notorious *The Driller Killer* with this unflinching revenge thriller. Maligned on its original release, the film is now regarded as a classic, thanks largely to the late Zoë Tamerlis Lund's remarkable central performance as the mute rape victim who is transformed into a man-hating spree killer. A remastered Region A US Blu-ray was released last year.



Night of the Living Dead

Described on its 1968 release as 'an orgy of sadism' and 'one of the most gruesomely terrifying movies ever made', George Romero's revolutionary zombie film took cinemagoers on a gruelling tale of gory terror far removed from the traditional fright flicks of the era. Of the two UK BDs, we suggest sticking with the old Optimum release, as the Network disc is missing some dialogue.



Piranha

By far the best of the many *Jaws* rip-offs that swam into cinemas in the late '70s, *Piranha* rises above other creature-features thanks to the winning combination of Joe Dante's playful direction and John Sayles' knowing screenplay. Funny and frightening in equal measure, this killer fish flick may have only cost $600,000 to make, but in terms of entertainment value it's absolutely priceless. The recent 3D remake is also worth a look.



Plan 9 From Outer Space

Is Ed Wood's 1959 sci-fi horror really 'the worst film ever made'? Not really. Inept, infantile and incoherent it may be, but it's never boring; the myriad faults and general weirdness only make it more fun. Heck, given the choice, we'd sooner watch *Plan 9...* over *...The Phantom Menace* any day of the week. The All-region US BD includes restored black-and-white and colour versions.



Psycho

Alfred Hitchcock's most famous flick was deemed too gruesome an idea to be produced by his regular studio partner Paramount, so the director got the shower-scene classic rolling under his own independent Shamley Productions banner, partly keeping the budget under $1m by opting to shoot in black-and-white. Estimated eventual box office takings of around $50m proved Hitch's instincts right.



Re-animator

Grande guignol splatterfests don't come any more audacious than Stuart Gordon's 1985 directorial debut. In addition to giving film fans a new horror icon in the form of creepy medical-student-cum-mad-scientist Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs), *Re-Animator* proved equally proficient at both splitting sides and churning stomachs – something that is more evident than ever via its recent Blu-ray restoration.



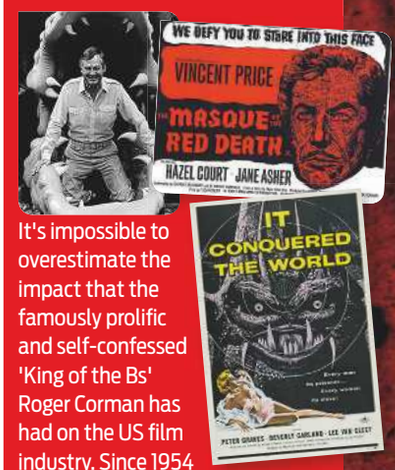
Return of the Living Dead

This hip parody of George Romero's zombie films plonks a gang of punks in the middle of a cemetery full of fast-moving, fast-talking ghouls and then sits back to watch the chaos unfold. As well as looking great, the UK Blu-ray also restores the film's original rock soundtrack.



Carry on Corman

The elder statesman of independent cinema

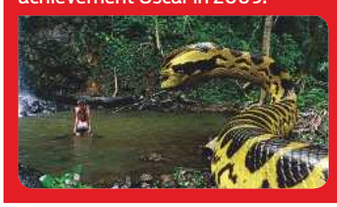


It's impossible to overestimate the impact that the famously prolific and self-confessed 'King of the Bs' Roger Corman has had on the US film industry. Since 1954 he has produced and directed over 400 films and is still cranking out creature-features like *Sharktopus vs. Pteracuda* and *Piranhaconda*.

Movie mentor

Corman is also responsible for giving some of Hollywood's most notable filmmakers and actors their big break. The likes of Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Ron Howard, James Cameron, Jack Nicholson and Joe Dante all graduated from what has become affectionately known as 'The Corman Film School' during the formative part of their careers.

It's only fitting then that Corman was awarded an honorary lifetime achievement Oscar in 2009.



Asylum seekers!

The rise and rise of the 'mockbuster'





B movie knock-offs of Hollywood blockbusters are nothing new. But US indie studio and distributor The Asylum has made it the cornerstone of its business model.

Founded in 1997, The Asylum really hit its stride in 2005 when its low-budget adaptation of H.G. Well's *The War of the Worlds* (cashing in on the success of that Summer's Spielberg film) became a massive hit with video rental stores.



Since then, alongside monster movies like *Mega Shark vs Giant Octopus*, The Asylum has produced a steady stream of so-called 'mockbusters' with titles like *Transmorphers*, *AVH: Alien vs. Hunter* and *Atlantic Rim*. However, 2012's *Age of Hobbits* was a step too far for Warner Bros. who filed a copyright infringement suit necessitating a change of name.



Q: The Winged Serpent

Larry Cohen's cheap and cheerful monster movie cleverly relegates the expected mayhem to the background in order to tell the story of a small-time crook who stumbles across the creature's lair. Great performances and a canny script make it easy to look past the naff stop-motion effects – but even these have a charm of their own. Fans should swoop on the All-region US Blu-ray.



Sharknado

A tongue-in-cheek mashup of *Jaws* and *Twister*, with a cast including former *Beverly Hills 90210* star Ian Ziering and *American Pie*-ster Tara Reid, *Sharknado* is perhaps the most well-known flick to come out of The Asylum (see box, left). A riot of green-screen acting and CGI teeth, it broke SyFy channel viewing figures when it debuted in 2011, and has since been given a budget Blu-ray release.



Shivers

The residents of a sleek high-rise apartment block are transformed into sex-crazed maniacs by oddly phallic-looking parasites in David Cronenberg's directorial debut. Rough and ready in all the right ways, *Shivers* is a provocative piece of body horror that still has the power to shock. Sadly, while the UK Blu-ray makes *Shivers* look better than we ever thought possible, it's based on a pre-cut version of the film.



Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama

Writer/director/producer David DeCoteau's ramshackle 1987 exploitation flick follows a group of students who run afoul of a demonic genie trapped inside a bowling trophy. As well as *that* title, it's notable as being one of only two films in which legendary '80s Scream Queens Linnea Quigley, Michelle Bauer and Brinke Stevens appear together.



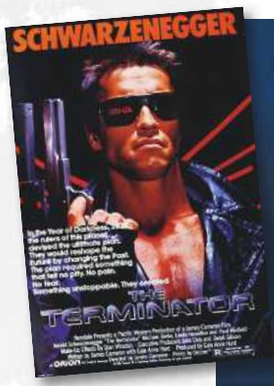
The Stuff

'Are you eating it? Or is it eating you?' B movie auteur Larry Cohen turned his satirical sights on our obsession with junk food via this tongue-in-cheek flick about an addictive (and sentient) dessert that is threatening to take over the world, one delicious mouthful at a time. Remarkably, *The Stuff* underwent a 2K restoration for its UK Blu-ray debut, which also benefits from a terrific hour-long doc about the making of the film.



The Terror of Tiny Town

Of the countless B movie Westerns made during the '30s and '40s, *The Terror of Tiny Town* (ironically) towers above the rest due to its infamy as the world's first 'all-midget show'. Naturally, this fact is milked for as many gags as possible – which means we get to see cowboys riding Shetland ponies and walking under swinging saloon bar doors. Rustle up a copy on R1 DVD.





The Terminator

James Cameron put the experience gained working under B movie legend Roger Corman to good use when writing and directing this low-budget sci-fi cracker. It made Arnold Schwarzenegger a star, Cameron an A-list director, gave us the immortal line 'I'll be back' and proved that stunning special effects needn't cost the earth to achieve.



The Toxic Avenger

This trashy superhero spoof sees a 98lb weakling changed into a 'hideously deformed creature of superhuman size and strength' after falling into a barrel of toxic waste. While most Troma films are borderline unwatchable dross, *The Toxic Avenger* gets the brand's mix of gore, gags and sauciness spot-on, resulting in an unforgettable 88 minutes of cinematic nuttiness.



Trancers

Pitched somewhere between *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator*, Charles Band's 1985 sci-fi gem sees future-cop Jack Deth sent back in time to 1985 to eliminate a fugitive time traveller. With its fun concept and terrific performance from Tim Thomerson (supported here by a before-she-was-famous Helen Hunt) it comes as little surprise that *Trancers* was a big enough hit to justify five-and-a-half DTV sequels.



The Tingler

Wacky 1959 horror from director William Castle (*House on Haunted Hill*) and starring Vincent Price, *The Tingler* wooed cinemagoers by applying vibrations to seats to correspond to the onscreen 'tingles' delivered by the movie's parasitic killer, and a finale that saw the beastie run amok in a movie theatre. It's unavailable on BD, so you'll need to import the Region 1 US DVD edition, which packs some decent extras.



Tremors

A big studio picture (Universal), but one that pays loving homage to '50s creature features – without veering into spoof territory – as Kevin Bacon and Fred Ward's smalltown handymen go up against giant, ravenous worms. The initial BD release had overzealous edge enhancement and DNR; slightly better imagery can be found on a more recent boxset which includes the film's three sequels.



Troll 2

A young boy attempts to save his family from being turned into plants and devoured by a pack of vegetarian goblins in this brilliantly incompetent horror-comedy, which has developed a keen cult following over the past quarter century. In addition to importing MGM's '20th Anniversary' Region A-locked Blu-ray, you should also pick up *Best Worst Movie*, the acclaimed documentary about *Troll 2* and its fans, on R1 DVD.



The Wicker Man

Actually released in 1973 as the B movie on a double-bill with *Don't Look Now*, *The Wicker Man* went through a fraught, cash-strapped production, and harried editing process, but still managed to emerge with enough of its unsettling horror intact to mark it down as a genre classic.



The Wild Angels

Roger Corman helped to create a whole new genre, the outlaw biker movie, with this authentically ugly Hells Angels flick. Starring Peter Fonda (three years before *Easy Rider*), Nancy Sinatra, Bruce Dern and members of the Coffin Cheaters motorcycle club, it's a tough, uncompromising film that is well worth revisiting on Region A BD.



White Zombie

Bela Lugosi stars in this 1934 horror cheapie about a young woman's transformation into a zombie at the hands of an evil voodoo master. Very much a product of its time, *White Zombie* suffers from outdated racial elements and acting that is stiffer than any corpse. But its status as the first full-length zombie film, and curious fairy tale atmosphere, make the Region A 'Cary Roan...' Blu-ray well worth a look.



X: The Man With X-ray Eyes

Shot in three weeks on a budget of just $300,000, Roger Corman's 1963 sci-fi/horror parable stars Ray Milland as a scientist whose experiments with X-ray vision have terrifying consequences. Imaginative, intelligent and eerie, *X...* is a superb example of what can be achieved with limited resources – and has just been released on Blu-ray in the States.



Bargain basement!

With an install cost of less than £10,000, this tidy screening room definitely piques **Mark Craven's** interest...



The projector screen, from Screen Excellence, measures 120in



WHILE THE PREMIUM picture palaces delivered by professional install outfits are guaranteed to get us salivating, a dedicated movie room doesn't have to be über-expensive. Proof, if you need it, comes in the shape of this basement theatre undertaken by FAB AV from St. Albans, with hardware and installation costs coming in at under £10,000.

The room is one part of a basement in a new-build property, with the subterranean space being split into two to create a games room next door. When FAB AV were brought in, the room that was to be the cinema was a bare-block shell.

The owner demanded a theatre that could be used for movie and bigscreen sports viewing for three generations of his family, with multichannel audio and simple furnishings and decoration. The room mixes traditional sofa seating (the owner's preference) with a rear tier of original cinema chairs (for his grandchildren to munch popcorn on), all recovered to fit the monochrome décor.

A screen par Excellence

Taking centre stage is a 120in 16:9 ratio projector screen from British company Screen Excellence. A fixed-frame model, it's mounted on the main wall and uses an acoustically transparent fabric – important as that wall also hosts the LCR soundstage of the room's 7.1 speaker system, with the centre channel hidden. For this trio, Monitor Audio's in-wall WT280 models were specified. Each features an 8in C-CAM bass driver and a pivoting C-CAM gold dome tweeter (rated up to 30kHz) in a traditional two-way design.

The construction of the tanked external wall meant there was a gap behind that would house in-wall speakers. However, the surrounds are mounted on-wall, as each side is load-bearing concrete, which limited the options. Monitor Audio's FX models are used here; the rear back channels are delivered by a pair of in-ceiling CT280s, while a Silver subwoofer, parked in the front corner, tackles bass duties. Because there's a solid concrete floor above, it was decided that soundproofing the cinema wasn't necessary.

Giving the speakers their grunt is a mid-range Pioneer receiver, housed in a rack in a nearby plant room, along with a BDP-450 >

Kit checklist

MONITOR AUDIO: 3 x WT280 in-wall speakers; 2 x CT280 in-ceiling speakers; 2 x Silver FX on-wall surround speakers; Silver subwoofer
PIONEER: AV receiver; Blu-ray player
JVC: DLA-X55 projector
SCREEN EXCELLENCE: 120in 16:9 acoustically transparent projection screen
SKY: Sky+HD receiver
RECOVERED CINEMA SEATING

disc spinner from the same brand. A Sky+HD box is also racked for those all-important sporting events.

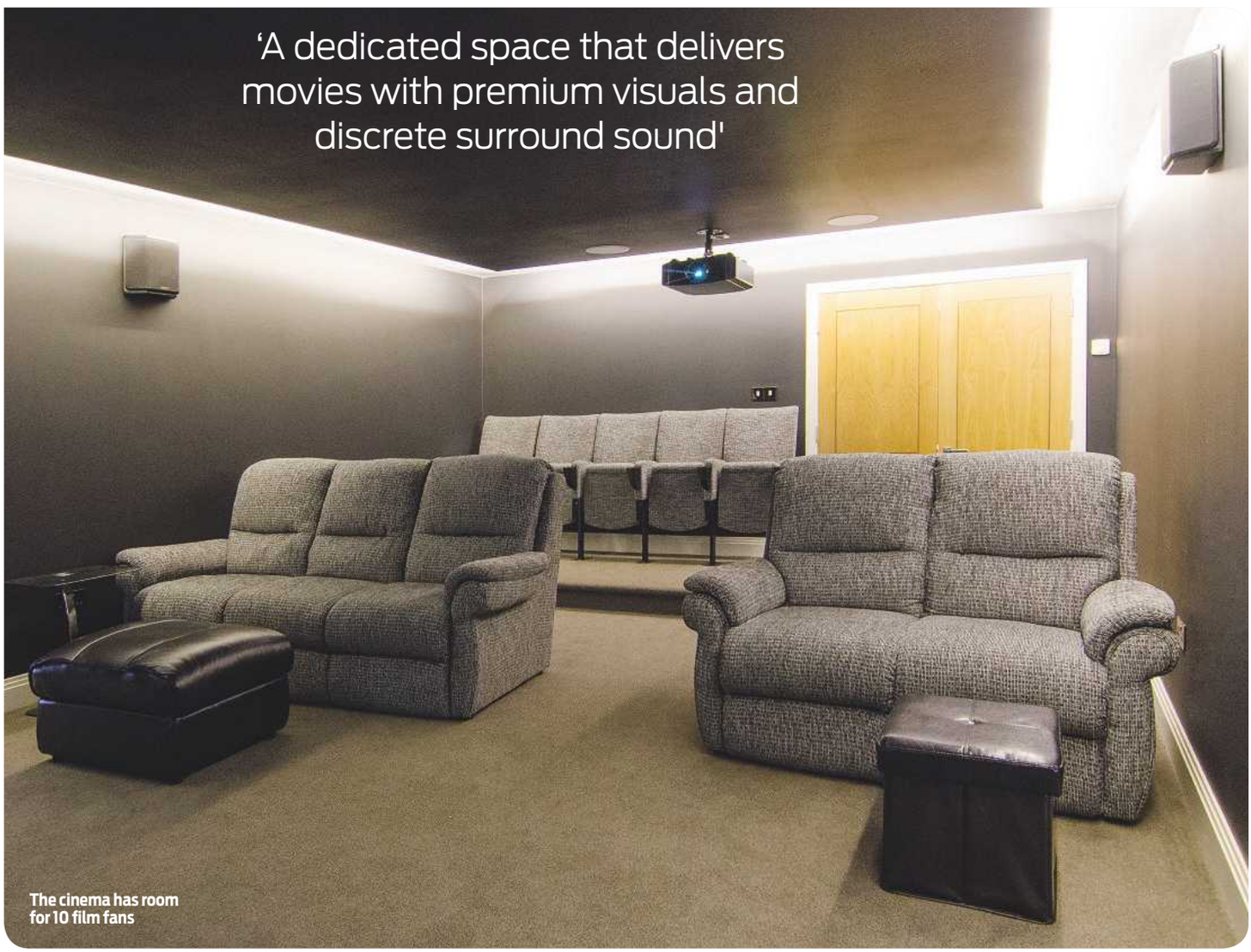
The lynchpin of the system is a JVC projector – the Japanese company continues to be a favourite amongst pro installers. In this instance, a JVC DLA-X55, ceiling-mounted at the room's rear, creates the largescreen HD visuals, aided by the company's eShift tech and fulsome calibration options. Says FAB AV installer Phillip Warris: 'This projector provides cinematic picture quality with flawless black levels and real depth of colour, yet is also a cost-effective solution and thus ideal for this installation.'

No-frills cinema

Often, we see bespoke home theatres controlled via dedicated Smart solutions, with slick one-button automation of source, power and display hardware. That's not the case here. Instead, individual remotes are still used, in conjunction with IR repeaters. Old school – and affordable – although FAB may return at a later date to install a system to simplify things. In fact, affordability is a recurring factor here. There's no acoustic room treatment beyond the carpeted floor, while lighting is only adjustable via a manual dimmer.

These are additional elements that can be considered again in the future, of course. What the owner has now is a dedicated space that delivers movies with premium visuals and discrete (and discreet) surround sound, and without breaking the bank ■

'A dedicated space that delivers movies with premium visuals and discrete surround sound'



The cinema has room for 10 film fans



Monitor Audio's Silver FX dipole/bipole speakers (right) are used for the on-wall surround channels

Blu-rays are spun in a Pioneer BDP-450, a high-performance, bargain-priced universal deck





MUSICAL IMAGES

HARPENDEN • EDGWARE • BECKENHAM

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY



CS8040HD

BP-8060ST - Floor-standing bipolar SuperTower loudspeaker with built-in powered subwoofer



LEGENDARY SOUND

With Musical Images it's easy to discover the very finest in sound and entertainment; like Definitive Technology's stunning speaker systems, championed by music star John Legend…pure sound and the perfect accompaniment to **Dolby Atmos**. With 3 showrooms, 7 demonstration rooms, expertise, experience, patience and professionalism, for the very best in home entertainment there's no better destination than Musical Images.

3 times award winner
HOME CINEMA CHOICE
"Best Multiroom Installation"



www.musical-images.co.uk

musical images

@musical_images

Musical Images Showrooms

126 High Street, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1EB
020 8663 3777 beckenham@musicalimages.co.uk

173 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JX
020 8952 5535 edgware@musicalimages.co.uk

82 High Street, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 2SP
01582 764246 harpenden@musicalimages.co.uk

NEW SHOWROOM

Opening times - 9.30am to 5.30pm

HIFI • HOME CINEMA • MULTIROOM AUDIO • HOME AUTOMATION
LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS • A/V DESIGN & CONSULTANCY

Audio Visual Lifestyle Ltd trading as Musical Images. Finance options available, subject to status. E&OE

quadral

HiFi / Surround Speakers



Quintas 6500 Surround System

Quadral meet the need for excellent acoustic signal reproduction by launching this 5.0 speaker system. The combination of dynamic, crisp sound, solid quality workmanship and a sleek yet very elegant appearance brings you a high performance at a surprisingly low cost that will amaze you.

RRP £599

For your nearest dealer call 0203 5442338
More fantastic products from NuNu Distribution Limited
www.nunudistribution.co.uk

NuNu Distribution Ltd

Sunday 28th June 2015

Second Annual

North West Audio Show

Cranage Hall, Cheshire

FREE ENTRY FREE PARKING

Register at www.audioshow.co.uk or telephone 07561803670

Hifi Pig
www.hifipig.com

REVIEWS

➜**HARDWARE HIGHLIGHTS** **SAMSUNG** Mid-range Blu-ray player and 48in 4K TV **PIONEER** Floorstanding speakers with integrated Atmos upfirers **OPTOMA NUFORCE** Performance-focused processor/power amp duo **EPSON** Laser projector with 4K uprezzing **YAMAHA** 9.2-channel AV receiver **POLK** Soundbar/sub **ROUNDUP** Four affordable portable projectors fight it out **AND MORE**



Q the movie!

The 3000 series (see p54) is the latest compact setup from Brit brand Q Acoustics. And it rocks...

HCC RATINGS KEY...

Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★☆
Acceptable	★★★☆☆
Disappointing	★★☆☆☆
Dire	★☆☆☆☆

Epson's 4K enhanced laser projector is a home cinema revelation, insists **Steve May**

Laser eye surgery!



I CAN SEE clearly now the grain is gone. I can literally see all obstacles in my way. Gone are the dark clouds... replaced by perfect shadow detail and absolute blacks. This is laser home cinema, and it's nothing less than a revolution in bigscreen viewing.

The commercial cinema world is already upgrading. Premium chain IMAX has promised to equip a dozen super-sized theatres in 2015, including the Empire in Leicester Square. Auro-3D promoter Barco has installed laser projectors in screens across France, Brussels and Madrid. Sony Professional is expected to unveil its first laser theatre projector at the end of the year.

But you can own a laser cinema tomorrow. All you need is the Epson EH-LS10000. And while not quite boasting the same spec as its commercial cousins, this innovative projector is no less remarkable and available for a fraction of the price.

Of course, we've seen projectors with solid-state light sources before. LED Picos are ten a penny (see our grouptest on p59), and Viewsonic has touted a laser/LED hybrid, the Pro9000. None come close to the performance offered here, though. This a PJ for the OLED age.



The remote includes a button to toggle 4K enhancement

In exalted company

At £6,000, the EH-LS10000 is priced directly against Sony's native 4K/UHD VPL-VW300ES and JVC's e-Shift 3-equipped DLA-X700R, competing not just with 2,160p pixel density images, 10-bit colour richness and firework dynamics, but other attributes not image-related.

Size is one. At 18kg, the EH-LS10000 is undeniably a heavyweight. Large enough to swallow two of the brand's EH-TW6600 projectors whole, with room for nachos, this is very much a dedicated install product. You won't be pulling it out from under the stairs and plonking it on a coffee table.

Not that you'll mind bolting it to your ceiling. Finished in stealthy matt black and as curvaceous as a pebble, it looks gorgeous. The lens is protected by a sliding cover, while the forward-facing air intakes curve with the chassis. Had it been finished in verdant green and sporting a few extra fins, it would have been a ringer for *Thunderbird 2*.

AV Info

PRODUCT: Premium-grade home cinema projector

POSITIONING: Epson's flagship, above the TW models

PEERS: Sony VPL-VW300ES; JVC DLA-X700R



HOME CINEMA Choice Reference Status

HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY

Epson's new PJ is aimed at dedicated movie rooms



The curved chassis helps to hide some of the Epson's bulk

Semiconductor laser diode technology isn't cheap, which goes some way to justifying the premium price tag. The EH-LS10000 employs a blue laser light engine with two light paths. One blue laser diode generates blue light routed through an optical diffuser, while the other uses a phosphor wheel to generate yellow, which is then in turn split into red and green via a dichroic mirror. The result is a three-colour light source compatible with Epson's long-established 3LCD panel technology.

The manufacturer rates the life of this laser power plant at 30,000 hours in Eco mode. Essentially, this means it'll still be working when 8K is old news, so there's no need to factor in the cost and angst of replacement light bulbs.

Cable mismanagement

Connections are to the rear, hidden behind a cosmetic grille. This unscrews to offer access to two HDMI inputs, Ethernet LAN, two 12V triggers, component and composite video inputs, a PC D-sub and RS232. You better not plan on using them all, though. The cable management entrance isn't big enough to accommodate a full house.

'HDMI 1' is, assures Epson, HDCP 2.2 compliant for use with upcoming 4K content, such as Ultra HD Blu-ray and set-top box solutions from the likes of Sky and BT. Epson also claims 4K native support up to 60fps, even though the HDMI inputs are v1.4. This would imply that some chroma subsampling is going on to work around bandwidth limitations.

There's no on-body control cluster. Instead there's a pop-out panel that offers joystick menu navigation, source selection, lens adjustment and power.

Menu and image options are comparable to other models in Epson's range. Image manipulation and setup options are comprehensive. Keystone and lens shift (90-degree vertical and 40-degree horizontal) correction help square up your picture image, and there's a 2.1x motorised zoom. A ten-position lens memory function allows you to change zoom and lens alignment to suit different content. The projection distance at wide/tele settings, to achieve a 100in image, is 2.83m-6m.

The EH-LS10000 may be large, but it's surprisingly quiet. Thanks to some clever heat management, it purrs along at a consistent 19dB in Eco mode; a vague whisper that will be easily masked by the full-blown surround sound system that will no doubt be nearby. Laser light doesn't require any warm-up; it's virtually instant on (just six seconds to power up) at full brightness. The projector was bright and beaming long before my electric screen, activated by the 12V trigger, had even descended from the ceiling. Tasty.

As clear as night and day

White and colour light output are rated at a modest 1,500 Lumens, but any concerns about the brightness of the projector are quickly squashed when up and running. Indeed, its pictures are actually watchable in moderate levels of ambient light – good news for sports parties and social gaming shindigs. But it's in a dedicated light-controlled theatre that the EH-LS10000 (literally) shines.

Of course, it's not just the laser assembly that's notable beneath the hood of this movie-room monster. This projector also reintroduces 3LCD Reflective technology. The company first teased this at IFA 2010, in the form of the ill-fated EH-R4000. While that projector impressed, it never came to market because the reflective panels were too difficult to manufacture. It transpires all the working EH-R4000 samples seen at the time were made by hand. The idea was, regretfully, shunted back into R&D – until now. Reflective panels allow Epson to achieve a far higher contrast ratio compared to transmissive LCD panels. The visibility of the pixel grid has been



The HDMI input labelled '1' supports the HDCP 2.2 copy protection standard

reduced, significantly increasing image punch and detail.

All of which conspires to imbue laser-projected images with a very different character to those cast by a standard UHP lamp and regular 3LCD panels. Colour fidelity is outstanding. Reds and blues appear deeply saturated, without the merest hint of noise. There's an old-school Technicolor lushness on display that's sumptuous. It's ermine for the eyeballs.

Image presets comprise Cinema, Digital Cinema, Dynamic, Natural, Living Room and Adobe RGB. Both Living Room and Dynamic send the projector into noisy hyperdrive and should be avoided. Cinema proved my go-to mode as it's extremely well judged. Should you feel the need, there's also provision for ISF calibration. Spec-wise, the EH-LS10000 claims to eat the standard sRGB colour space for breakfast and even exceed the DCI colour standard, something new-fangled Quantum Dot TVs fall shy of.

> 'A phenomenal cinema projector. Great-looking content, like Marvel's *Avengers*, will have your jaw on the floor'

Pictures enjoy extraordinary sharpness. This is immediately notable on interfaces like the Sky Planner. The 2,160p upscaling pays dividends here, with none of the mini-jaggies you might see on a comparable Full HD model. And CGI animation looks astonishing.

Dynamism is another strong point, with the Epson throwing forth deep blacks and gradated shadow detail. The high-contrast monochromatic stop-motion of *Frankenweenie* (Blu-ray) looks stunning; lighting bolts crack pure white against a pitch black sky as Sparky is brought back to life.

And when Jor-El escapes General Zod amid planet-wide quakes (*Man of Steel*, Sky Movies), explosions glare in the deeply-shadowed caverns, then baby Kal-El gets blasted with a Kryptonian McGuffin and the resulting fireworks are dazzling. HDR? Who needs it!

Such high contrast doesn't come with the traditional scritchy noise of dynamic iris adjustment. The EH-LS10000 controls its laser engine rapidly, adjusting the light output between zero and 100 per cent without need of a mechanical iris. It can also shut the laser off completely to achieve absolute black; impossible on a lamp-based beamer.

Playing with pixels

But what of the '4K enhancement' feature that debuts on the EH-LS10000? While the projector supports a native 4K input and outputs a 3,840 x 2,160 resolution image, the panels betwixt are HD resolution. So at the heart of the projector is a 4K upscaling chipset, which is used in conjunction with optical chicanery that electronically shifts alternate frames half a pixel across and half a pixel up, effectively doubling the frame rate and the apparent resolution. The technique is similar to what JVC has done with its e-Shift engine. There are different levels of 4K enhancement on offer, rated 1-5. (After some experimentation, I stuck at 3). There are also variations of range and strength, adjustable on a sliding scale.

The process does a remarkable job. I may have been watching Zack Snyder's superhero romp on Sky, but subjectively it could just as easily have been coming from a 4K cinema DCP. Frankly, viewed in isolation, I doubt many could tell the difference.

The projector's 3D performance is similarly impressive. Thanks to the 480Hz vertical refresh rate offered by the projector's 3D drive, crosstalk double imaging is negligible. The menu sequence from *Tangled*, a familiar 3D torture test, is rendered without clouds of phantom lanterns. There's some loss of brightness, but not as much as you might imagine. 3D animation retains vibrancy and colour.

Resolution, however, is regular 1080p. Epson's 4K pixel enhancement doesn't work when you're wearing the funny glasses. There's also 2D-to-3D conversion with depth control offered, but only a heathen would resort to such crassness. Two pairs of Active glasses ship in the box.

Reflective LCD panels and laser light aren't a panacea for all ills, though. A moving test pattern confirms a familiar loss of motion resolution at just 6.5ppf. In this respect, the EH-LS10000's performance is no different from any other 3LCD projector with token interpolation. However, this doesn't translate to any perceived lack of clarity; the projector maintains a genuinely filmic quality.

Love at first light

Epson's EH-LS10000 is a phenomenal home cinema projector that sees the brand reach for a slice of the high-end and grab it with ease. It may not be native 4K, but the job it does with 1080p sources is nothing short of remarkable. Great-looking content, like Marvel's *Avengers* on Blu-ray, will have your jaw on the floor. Epson may well be shilling a pixel-manipulated illusion, but no one is doing it better. There's an intricacy and beauty to its images which defies logic. 'Do you really think I'm pretty?' asks Scarlett Johansson of her grizzled captor. My dear, you've never looked prettier. Perhaps 4K is a state of mind?

Welcome to the next frontier in projection technology ■

Specifications

3D: Yes. Active shutter
4K: Not native, but 3,840 x 2,160 via enhanced picture presentation
CONNECTIONS: 2 x HDMI (v1.4); Ethernet; component and composite video inputs; PC D-sub; RS232; 2 x 12V triggers
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): 1,500 Lumens
CONTRAST (CLAIMED): 'Absolute black'
DIMENSIONS: 550(w) x 225(h) x 553(d)mm
WEIGHT: 18kg
FEATURES: 4K Enhancement technology; 19dB fan noise (Eco mode); 30,000-hour LED lamp life (Eco mode); Epson Poly-silicon TFT active matrix 0.74in panel Reflective HTPS; laser diodes; image interpolation; ten memory lens setting; vertical/horizontal lens shift; vertical keystone correction; 2.1x powered zoom; motorized focus; 30-300in image size; 1.28-2.73:1 projection ratio

HCC Verdict



Epson EH-LS10000
→ £6,000 Approx → www.epson.co.uk
→ Tel: 01952 607 111
HIGHS: Lush colour performance; outstanding black level and shadow detail; quiet operation; superb 4K upscaling of Full HD content
LOWS: Large and hefty; not native 4K; HDMI inputs v1.4 not 2.0

Performance ★★★★★
Design ★★★★½
Features ★★★★★
Overall ★★★★★

Ed Selley treats his viewing room to a fuss-free Dolby Atmos speaker setup



Three bass drivers on each floorstander help them claim a low frequency response down to 38Hz

AV Info

PRODUCT: Integrated Atmos speaker package

POSITIONING: Pioneer's only Atmos-capable enclosures. Below the top-of-the-range EX line

PEERS: KEF R50 (Atmos modules); Atlantic Technology 44-DA (Atmos modules)

Cinema speakers with an Atmos punch

PUTTING SPEAKERS ON or in a ceiling for a Dolby Atmos system isn't an option for everyone, so speaker manufacturers have risen to Dolby's challenge with upfiring models to create that all important height info. So far, these have come in the shape of add-on modules. First to market with an integrated Atmos-capable design is Pioneer with its new S series models.

This range comprises the floorstanding FS73A, standmount BS73A and matching centre, the C73A. Pioneer does not build a subwoofer for the series in the EU (US customers are provided with one but it hasn't made the trip across the Atlantic) so buyers are free to find something to suit from another manufacturer.

The key feature of the FS73A and BS73A speakers is, of course, their upward-firing driver. This is a dual-concentric design, with a 4in aluminium midrange driver enclosing a 1in soft dome tweeter, which promises a decent punch to that reflected audio.

This dual-concentric design is also used as the main tweeter and midrange driver in all five speakers, aiming for a tonal balance across all channels, including the Atmos heights. Having a dedicated midrange driver at this price point is relatively unusual – most concentric driver rivals use the outer driver for midbass, but here you'll find dedicated bass units, too, meaning all the S73 speakers have more drivers than you might expect. The conventional bass driver is a 5.25in aluminium design, and is used either singly (the BS73A), in pairs (C73A) or in a potent trio (FS73A). Subsequently, this extra radiating area means the speakers claim lower frequency responses than you might anticipate (38Hz in the case of the floorstander), although no roll-off figures are quoted.



HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY

Relatively compact

Given the number of drivers at work here, Pioneer has done a commendable job of keeping the design of these speakers usefully compact and, unless you remove the grilles, you wouldn't immediately know there is anything significantly different about their form until you clock the second pair of terminals at the back. And I'd be inclined to keep the grilles in place as that upward-firing driver has 'dust trap' written all over it.

Aesthetically, they lack a strong visual identity, and I can't I say that I'm particularly enthused by black ash as a finish. But they're not ugly and won't dominate most rooms – the curved cabinets, which have sonic benefits in terms of resonance and resistance to standing waves, also reduce the visible bulk of the cabinets. That said, the BS73A surround is still a fairly hefty design for a speaker that many will be trying to place out of the way.

The floorstanders are fitted with a plinth to increase stability and this works well. And there's nothing about the build quality to cause concern.

Setting up what is my first home Atmos experience proved pretty painless. My resident Yamaha RX-A3040 was able to make a reasonable stab at distance and delay settings for all speakers, although a simple SPL meter check of levels meant that I raised the levels >


The top drivers fire on an angle towards your ceiling

of the upward-firing drivers over and above what the YPAO system set them to. A Tannoy TS2.12 was added to provide the necessary low- end as a suitably priced subwoofer.

Old-school introduction

As I've not had any Atmos speakers through for review until now, I've not sought out any of the Atmos-mixed films because, frankly, they all look terrible. As such, I initially used the Pioneers as a conventional quintet (some people may be buying these before upgrading their front-end hardware, if at all) and they proved very accomplished. I gave the S73s my new favourite reference scene – the congested and disjointed streetfight in *Fury* – and they did a fine job of making sense of the huge amount of war-tastic audio information being beamed at my listening position. They crafted a believable sense of the confined space both inside and outside the tank, with voices well-handled by the C73A amidst the mass of gunfire and explosions. And with all the speakers able to generate meaningful bass in their own right, the outcome was a more convincing soundstage, with low frequencies emanating from all corners of the room.

> 'This Pioneer set offers a convincing soundstage, with bass emanating from all corners of the room'

With the less punchy but rather more brooding *Gone Girl*, the speakers show that this ability to rationalise information and present it with plenty of fine detail is not merely useful with action fare, and their talents at producing an immersive soundstage with little sense of individual enclosures is amongst the best I've encountered at the price.

Voices in the David Fincher drama are well-textured and easy to follow. And the layered soundtrack oozes plenty of refinement, arguably at the expense of the last ounce of excitement but it makes the Pioneers easy to listen to for long periods.

Biting the bullet and switching to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the good news – for what is the key selling point of the Pioneers – is that the upwards-firing drivers are effective. In my listening room, with its 8ft-high ceiling, there was a genuine extra dimension to the way that the Pioneers perform. And with smooth integration with the main drivers, they avoid being showy or a gimmick – at least as much as not being a gimmick is possible when the subject matter is a group of anthropomorphic turtles escaping down a snowy mountainside. Moving onto the latest Atmos demo disc and its plethora of skilfully-mixed shorts confirms that Pioneer has managed to voice the S series in such a way as to give little hint your system isn't employing genuine downward-firing presence speakers. The extra immersion offered by these Atmos demos was tangible.

As a final and slightly unexpected ribbon to an already pretty attractive bow, the FS73 is a rather lovely performer in stereo. Bass extension without a subwoofer is perfectly respectable and that cohesion and space in the upper midrange makes them sound rich, refined and detailed. They might be designed with multichannel in mind but Pioneer hasn't forgotten the basics.

Competitive cabinets

And those basics do matter. Despite their additional drivers, any surround sound speaker array has to be competitive with 'normal' packages. This setup is more than good enough to stack up against similarly-priced rivals for a standard 5.1 experience, and superior in stereo to many.

When you do give them Atmos material, they prove a very effective means of adding extra info, and they show the promise of the format over and above the limitations of the existing material – you could enjoy more Steven Seagal DTV movies than current Atmos Blu-rays. And even without dedicated software, you can use them happily in Dolby Surround mode, and owners of older 7- or 9-channel AVRs might even want to experiment using those extra speaker terminals with Pro-Logic/Neo:X/Audyssey post-processing.

In short, this S series bundle is well up to the job of your future audio needs, but is perfectly capable of managing your existing ones, too ■

Specifications

PIONEER S-FS73A
DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 1in soft dome tweeters; 2 x 4in aluminium midrange drives; 3 x 5.25in aluminium bass drivers
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 38Hz-20kHz
SENSITIVITY: 86dB
POWER HANDLING: 140W
DIMENSIONS: 236(w) x 1,008(h) x 264(d)mm
WEIGHT: 16kg

PIONEER S-BS73A
DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 1in soft dome tweeters; 2 x 4in aluminium midrange drivers; 1 x 5.25in aluminium bass driver
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 50Hz-20kHz
SENSITIVITY: 85dB
POWER HANDLING: 140W
DIMENSIONS: 188(w) x 398(h) x 246(d)mm
WEIGHT: 7.1kg

PIONEER S-C73
DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 1in soft dome tweeter; 1 x 4in aluminium midrange driver; 2 x 5.25in aluminium bass drivers
ENCLOSURE: Sealed
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 45Hz-20kHz
SENSITIVITY: 85dB
POWER HANDLING: 140W
DIMENSIONS: 495(w) x 188(h) x 246(d) mm
WEIGHT: 8kg

HCC Verdict



Pioneer S series 5.0.4
➜ £2,150 approx ➜ www.pioneer.co.uk
➜ Tel: 0208 836 3501
HIGHS: Extremely effective in Atmos and normal surround; impressive bass output; solid build and efficient design
LOWS: Lacks the last ounce of excitement; black finish functional rather than beautiful

Performance ★★★★½
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★★★★
Overall ★★★★½

KALIBRATE LIMITED

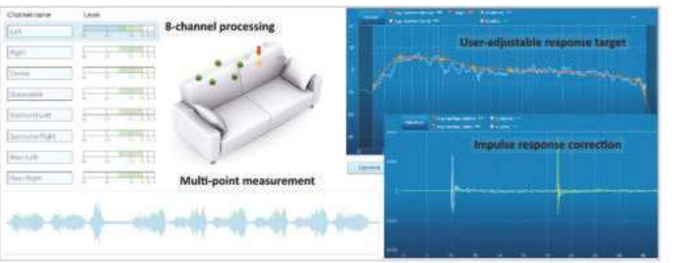
miniDSP

NOW PLAYING IN OUR DEMO ROOM

Book your demonstraton now!

FEATURING Dirac Live

Dirac Live support onboard



POWER|SOUND|AUDIO

SUBWOOFERS FROM POWER SOUND AUDIO COMING SOON TO OUR DEMO ROOM
15" SUBWOOFERS FROM £1,249









WWW.KALIBRATE.CO.UK
EMAIL: SALES@KALIBRATE.CO.UK
TELEPHONE: 01883 460 225 OR 07947 007644

10 MINS FROM JCT 6 M25, AND M23

THX CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL ON STAFF

Ed Selley goes back to basics with a pre/power duo with a surprising price tag

AV with angles

THE FEATURE LIST for a high-end AVR is now a literary work of some consequence. Modern amps tote a bewildering variety of functions and formats, and brands constantly strive to cram ever more into a single box.

Yet this explosion in features has not come with a significant price rise. It follows therefore that the core function of an AV receiver – to decode and amplify an audio signal – surely has less overall budget allocated to it than it used to in ye olden days. Those seeking the ultimate in pure power and processing bravado have often turned to a separates solution – a pre-amp and power amp combination – but, of late, the price of these has been climbing ever upward.

This makes the Optoma NuForce AVP-18 processor and MCA-20 power amplifier slightly unusual – and welcome. At a combined price of £2,400 they compete directly with flagship integrated receivers from the Japanese house brands, but do away with much of the add-on features that some people just don't want. I say 'some people' because others will consider this less-is-more principle as absurdly minimalist. And here's why...

The remote is relatively uncluttered and easy to use



Feature-stripped specification

The AVP-18 is built around four HDMI v1.4 inputs and a single ARC-enabled HDMI output. There's no twin screen or multizone video provision here, nor 4K video passthrough, HDCP 2.2 copy protection support or any of the other niceties that keep the forward-looking AV-holic awake at night. This alone could be a limiting factor.

These HDMI connections are supported by a pair of optical digital audio inputs, a pair of coaxial inputs and a single optical output. And with the sole exception of a Bluetooth adapter >



AV Info

PRODUCT: Processor/power amp pairing

POSITIONING: Optoma NuForce's top-flight AV gear

PEERS: Marantz AV7702/MM8807; Onkyo PR-SC5530/PA-MC5501



Both components are slim and stylish

HOME CINEMA Choice RECOMMENDED



The MCA-20 (bottom) features eight amplifier channels

that connects to a USB input on the rear panel, that is your lot. The only analogue connections are the eight phono outputs for connecting a power amp. Optoma NuForce argues that by deleting any form of analogue board, the digital board has shorter signal paths and therefore delivers a better performance.

The feature frugality doesn't end there. With no network functionality on board, the AVP-18 cannot be controlled by any sort of app, which means that it is totally dependent on the remote handset. This is a solid but fairly unremarkable piece of equipment, but it is at least easy to use.

As a strict seven-channel processor, the AVP-18 will find most employment in traditional 5.1 or 7.1-channel setups (Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio-flavoured). Dolby Pro-Logic IIz is an option should you be running front heights rather than rear backs. Provision for Atmos and DTS:X is, need you ask, not offered, and the design doesn't look physically upgradeable to handle them.

Of course, the advantage of the two-box layout is that it is possible to buy this pairing now taking advantage of the cost-effective price of the AVP-18 and update it at a later date either with more Optoma NuForce hardware or something from another brand.

Power in a small package

The MCA-20 is the larger of two power amplifiers that Optoma NuForce produces. By the standards of multichannel power amplifiers, however, it is a usefully compact device, measuring only 100mm high.

There's no shortage of power on tap. Claimed figures are 150W into 8 ohms, rising to 278W into four-ohm loads, meaning that the MCA-20 gets impressively close to doubling output as impedance halves – the holy grail of amplifier design. This heady combination of high power and small size is down to the use of Class D amplification – a NuForce speciality. Unusually, the amplifier is an eight- rather than seven-channel design, presumably due to the amps being built in stereo pairs. This would make the use of a passive subwoofer feasible.

As a duo, the Optoma NuForce pairing are rather striking. Stacked together they have about the same frontal area as a regular heavyweight AVR, although the power amp is rather deeper. The angling to the front panels gives them a distinctive and very businesslike appearance. The absence of front-panel controls means you really don't want to lose the remote but gives the AVP-18 a clean appearance that is often lacking in AV products. Build quality is also top-notch, with the metal casework feeling impressively substantial.

It is perhaps a good thing that the AVP-18 is a relatively simple device because the onscreen and setup menus are not especially intuitive or easy to use. The AVP-18 uses laddered menus which adjust once selected. This works fine in principle but it is too easy to move across accidentally and start adjusting the next parameter before you've finished with the one you want. The AVP-18 can also show changes to incoming formats onscreen



The AVP-18 offers a front-panel display

but leaves the message there for longer than is ideal. You can switch it off altogether but you can't adjust the time it is active for – given the small front display can't show much information, you tend to grin and bear it.

This processor does boast a fairly crude but effective auto setup function, as well as manual EQ if you don't like the end results.

The minimalist ethos is fairly effective but if you are moving to the Optoma NuForce from a well-specced one-box amp, you may find it a little bare bones.

Intergalactic performance

Connected to the Pioneer speaker package (reviewed on p44) and my Tannoy subwoofer, the Optoma NuForce pairing makes a persuasive case for the stripped-back feature set and high power output philosophy. The most immediately noticeable aspect of the performance is that everything feels extremely energetic. Even with levels studiously checked and set, there is a sense of intense power and activity from all channels. With the prison break sequence in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (Blu-ray) this equates to a very visceral and exciting performance. The speed with which effects are shifted around, and with which they start and stop, is truly exceptional.

> 'The AVP-18 and MCA-20 deliver a ferocious performance for the money... dynamic and effortless'

This fleet-footed, vigorous character is ideal for Marvel's modern blockbuster, and is aided by the huge reserves of power on offer. The MCA-20 makes good on its impressive power claims and exerts a tremendous control over connected speakers. Gunfire, in particular, is a perfect combination of volume and impact that gives the Optoma NuForce duo real authority with action films. The dynamism and effortless energy of the amp is extremely exciting. Even when you listen at perfectly normal and domestically-friendly levels, it has an unruffled air that some of the single-box competition struggles to match.

The only slight downside with this boundless energy is that when you watch something less relentlessly action-based, such as Oscar-trap *The Imitation Game*, this affordable combination still seems determined to make things more visceral than they really should be. There is a huge amount of detail and the same vibrancy as before, but it seems less appropriate portraying the life and times of Alan Turing than it does covering the escapades of Chris Pratt and his band of bonkers space pals.

Quite how much this will bother you is going to come down to personal preference, but on the understanding that the presentation is always going to be on the lively side, there is much to like here. Importantly, the liveliness of the performance never comes at the expensive of harshness or an overly forward nature. Indeed, you can wind the Optoma NuForce amp up to deafening volume levels and it stays impressively refined. There are very few comparably priced speaker packages that are going to present it with any significant challenge.

It is also a sound that is forgiving when you turn your attention to less perfect material. The performance with broadcast and on-demand fare is consistently powerful and engaging and, interestingly, the same sense of surround energy is present when the AVP-18 is used in Pro-Logic mode, suggesting that this is something that has been voiced in deliberately. While it still isn't exactly subtle, it is generally a lot of fun, and unlike many pieces of equipment that can sound a little recessed at lower volumes, it remains pretty lively even down at late-night levels.

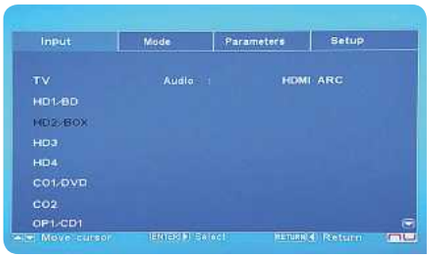
A final impressive attribute for the Optoma NuForce is that the performance in stereo is extremely good. I'm a little sceptical of relying on the digital decoding of a product when I have perfectly good decoding in the source, but the AVP-18 served up a believable and natural sound when a Naim ND5XS was connected via coaxial. One-box AV receivers have improved in stereo over the last few years but there is a delicacy to this combination that is more reminiscent of a well-sorted piece of two-channel equipment. If your love of multichannel dovetails with a vinyl fixation this isn't going to be the device for you, but there is a lot of potential here.

Oddly intriguing

To sum up, this is a slightly odd proposition. Well, actually the AVP-18 is the curio. Its lack of future-proofing in terms of video support and lack of networking functionality means that if you have grown used to the extended feature set of modern AV receivers, Optoma NuForce's processor is going to feel a little on the basic side. And, when you take into account the AVP-18 is unlikely to offer anything in the way of future upgrades, it is definitely a specialised proposition.

This being said, in tandem with the MCA-20, you get ferocious performance for the money; agile, dynamic and grin-inducing. There is very little that the integrated competition can do to compete with the sheer energy and reserves of power that the Optoma NuForce offers. If you accept that the lifespan of the AVP-18 might not be as long as some of the competition this is a decent proposition with deeply impressive audio performance. A qualified recommendation ■

On the menu



➜ There's not much in the way of visual flair here, and it can take time to get used to the menu structure

Specifications

AVP-18 PROCESSOR
DOLBY TRUEHD: Yes. Plus/EX/Digital/Pro-Logic IIz
DTS-HD MASTER AUDIO: Yes. Plus ES/Neo:6
THX: No
MULTICHANNEL INPUT: No
MULTIROOM: No
AV INPUTS: 4 x digital audio (2 x optical and 2 x coaxial)
HDMI: 4 x inputs; 1 x output (v1.4)
VIDEO UPSCALING: No
COMPONENT VIDEO: No
DIMENSIONS: 430(w) x 81(h) x 341(d)mm
WEIGHT: 4.6kg
ALSO FEATURING: Bluetooth audio input via adaptor; auto calibration and manual EQ; front-panel display; onscreen display

MC-A20 POWER AMPLIFIER
POWER OUTPUT (CLAIMED): 8 x 150W (eight ohms)
CONNECTIONS: 8 x phono inputs; speaker terminals
DIMENSIONS: 432(w) x 100(h) 381(d)mm
WEIGHT: 11kg
ALSO FEATURING: All-metal construction; PWM amplifier modules

HCC Verdict



Optoma NuForce AVP-18/MCA-20
➜ £2,400 approx ➜ www.optoma.co.uk
➜ Tel: 01923 691 800
HIGHS: Tremendously powerful and lively performance in stereo and multichannel; solid build and handsome looks
LOWS: Can sound a little boisterous with calmer material; very limited spec and future-proofing

Performance ★★★★½
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★½☆☆
Overall ★★★★☆

The BD-J7500 is the latest BD deck from Samsung to offer fulsome features and efficient performance. **Danny Phillips** hits 'Play'

Do-it-all disc spinner

BLU-RAY, NOW INTO its ninth year, is under attack. Not only is it fending off the threat of on-demand video streaming and digital downloads, it's also living in the shadow of a newer, shinier 4K Blu-ray format looming on the horizon.

But for now the format soldiers on thanks to the efforts of companies, including Samsung, continue to churn out affordable, feature-packed players.

The BD-J7500 is such a deck. It usurps last year's BD-H6500 as Samsung's top model, and, as usual, its Blu-ray spinning talents are backed up by a wealth of Smart content and DLNA streaming.

Upgrades to the Smart hub for 2015 are mainly cosmetic, although there are a few notable tweaks, particularly the removal of Samsung's Movies & TV Shows section. With Netflix, Amazon and Blinkbox onboard to serve your cinematic streaming needs, it was obviously deemed surplus to requirements. Other apps include BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4OD and Demand 5, plus Deezer, Facebook and Twitter. There are shedloads of sappy lifestyle apps, games and puzzles too that you'll probably never use.

Note that the Tizen operating system offered by the brand's new tellies doesn't feature here either.

Visually the BD-J7500 is a stylish machine, taking a square-edged approach rather than the daft curved design of the cheaper BD-J5500 and BD-J5900. The main gloss-black bodywork is wrapped in a dark grey sleeve, which has been toned down from the showy silver of yesteryear. It serves no purpose but looks nice and sets the deck apart from the budget black-box masses.

A row of discreet touch-sensitive controls adorn the fascia alongside a USB port, disc tray and easy-to-read LED display. But like most Samsung players (and most budget players for that matter) there's a plastic fantastic feel to the casing, a stark reminder that this is not aimed at videophiles.

Any misgivings over build quality are forgiven with a peek at the rear panel, which will delight owners of legacy amplifiers



The curve-free BD-J7500 almost looks retro

HOME CINEMA Choice RECOMMENDED

without 3D or 4K passthrough (the deck features in-built UHD upscaling). There are two HDMI outputs, one to send HD audio to an amp while the other sends video to a display.

There's also a set of 7.1-channel analogue audio outputs plus optical out and Ethernet.

Dual-band Wi-Fi is a new addition to this year's range, allowing you to connect to a compatible router using either 5GHz frequency or the usual 2.4GHz. That means less interference from other devices and less crowding from other Wi-Fi networks.

The deck supports DLNA/UPnP streaming and plays most formats without fuss, including MKV, DivX, MP3 and FLAC. It can also form part of a multiroom system with Samsung's 'M' range of speakers using the Multiroom App. Throw in screen mirroring and Wi-Fi Direct and you've got yourself a well-connected deck.

Onscreen presentation is attractive without being so flashy that it overloads the processor. The removal of Movies & TV Shows makes the Home screen easier to digest, and stylised graphics and thumbnails lend a modern feel.

The virtual keyboard (for Wi-Fi password entry) and the Samsung Apps menu are slightly slow to respond, but disc loading and boot-up times are pleasingly fast.

Past master

The BD-J7500 conjures up punchy, vibrant pictures on my 55in screen. *X-Men: Days of Future Past*'s mixture of bright outdoor scenes (Paris, Saigon) and oppressive futuristic interiors are reproduced with impressive solidity and clarity.

It doesn't crush any detail amid the shadows of Xavier's school or sully the scrap between Beast and Logan with motion blur or judder. Colour-wise there's terrific texture and subtlety to Jennifer Lawrence's peachy human skin tones, but when she goes full Mystique her blue hues blare from the screen.

Videophiles might grumble about some minor smearing and twitchy pixels that weren't present on my Oppo BDP-105D, but casual viewers will be more than happy. Upscaled DVDs also look a little smeary, but otherwise it's a perfectly serviceable picture.

Playing CDs via analogue reveals the BD-J7500 to be a competent if not dazzling sonic performer. With Marvin Gaye's remastered *Trouble Man* soundtrack, it places instruments purposefully within the spacious stereo stage and retains the warmth and emotion in Gaye's voice. There's ample bass and pleasing crispness to the scuttling cymbals, but the slightly hard edge to the saxophone is a reminder of its budget leanings.

Take a punt

Samsung's BD-J7500 might not be the last word in video/audiophile quality then, but it's hard not to be smitten by a Blu-ray deck that crams so many features into its slender frame, including an unbeatable range of Smart content, and pays attention to connectivity. For that reason it's well worth a punt ■



AV Info

PRODUCT: Smart-laden Blu-ray player

POSITIONING:
Samsung's A-list model for this year

PEERS:
Sony BDP-S7200; Panasonic DMP-BDT370

Specifications

3D: Yes
UPSCALING: Yes. To 4K
MULTIREGION: No. Region B BD
HDMI: Yes. 2 x v1.4
COMPONENT: No
MULTICHANNEL ANALOGUE: Yes. 7.1
DIGITAL AUDIO: Yes. 1 x optical
ETHERNET: Yes
BUILT IN WI-FI: Yes. Dual-band
SACD/DVD-A: No/No
DOLBY TRUEHD/DTS-HD DECODING: Yes
DOLBY TRUEHD/DTS-HD BITSTREAM: Yes
DIMENSIONS: 430(w) x 46(h) x 201(d)mm
WEIGHT: 1.7kg
FEATURES: DLNA media playback (MKV, AVI, AVCHD, MP4, DivX, MP3, FLAC, AAC, WMA, WAV); USB port; Multiroom support with Android/iOS app; Samsung Apps; Screen Mirroring; Wi-Fi Direct; Standard, Dynamic, Movie, User picture modes

HCC Verdict



Samsung BD-J7500
➜ £190 approx ➜ www.samsung.co.uk
➜ Tel: 0330 726 7864

HIGHS: Stylish design; loads of features; fast disc loading and boot up; slick streaming functionality; punchy pictures; connectivity

LOWS: Minor picture artefacts; plasticky build; sluggish in places

Performance	★★★★☆
Design	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★☆

Danny Phillips falls in love with Q Acoustics' newest bargain-priced 5.1 speaker package

Shaking up the compact competition

SOME SPEAKER BRANDS start by creating expensive high-end models and then work their way down, but Q Acoustics ploughs its resources into the affordable end of the market. This approach has proved successful, with models offering great design and performance for the money.



The £700 5.1 package on test here is the successor to the 2000i Cinema Package that we raved about back in 2012. For this follow up, Q Acoustics has gone back to the drawing board. Well sort of – it's gone back to the drawing board but taken along a few old blueprints for inspiration.

Although the 3000 series has been built from the ground up – the company says it starts with a blank piece of paper for all its designs – the cabinet construction borrows elements from the company's Concept series, providing a solid foundation for the new tweeter and improved midrange drivers.

These revamped cabinets boast dual-layer front and top panels and pivotal internal bracing to strengthen them and minimise resonance. The result is a range of remarkably burly boxes that feel more substantial than their meagre price tags suggest.

But the star attraction is the new '2-in-1' Concentric Ring Dome tweeter, which, by drawing on both dome and ring radiator designs, aims to achieve low distortion and wide dispersion. It's decoupled from the cabinet using a resonance-absorbing butyl rubber housing.

The tweaks don't stop there. Q Acoustics has also upgraded the speakers' 4in midbass cones to a mix of paper and Aramid fibre

– more commonly known as Kevlar – which is said to make the structure stronger and more sonically predictable than the 2000i's carbon fibre/paper cones. The crossover has also been redesigned using higher-quality components.

This package includes two pairs of 'ultra compact' 3010s – the smaller of two standmount models alongside the 3020 – plus the 3090C centre and 3070S subwoofer. Those with the space and inclination can step up to 3050 floorstanders.

Despite the internal changes, the outsides bear a canny resemblance to the 2000i series, which is no bad thing. The 3010s look stunning for a budget set, with seamless curved edges and black magnetic grilles – a modern, funky approach that'll appease the Apple generation and traditionalists alike.

All come in a choice of Matte Graphite and American Walnut (pictured) as standard, but for an extra £200 you can step up to premium lacquered gloss black/white or leather finishes. Q Acoustics also sells optional stands and wall brackets to suit your installation.

The 3090C centre looks like an elongated 3010, sharing the same curves and colour scheme. The main difference is that it uses two 4in midbass drivers as opposed to the 3010's single unit.

The 3070S subwoofer is the least altered model of the lot. It sticks with the same design as the 2070Si, with its long ported enclosure and removable panel on the back that hides the cables. Build quality and spec are superb – there are twin front-firing 6.5in drive units, powered by a 140W amplifier, while the rear panel offers crossover and volume controls, a phase switch and stereo line inputs.

I found setup easier than with the 2000i system. The cable terminals have been moved from the underside to the back, which makes them less fiddly to connect – although they point in different directions, which is still a bit awkward with stiff cables.

Old faithful

Like previous Q Acoustics packages, the 3000 system's character is one of refinement and transparency, giving you a faithful facsimile of any soundtrack. It goes about its business with >

AV Info

PRODUCT: Compact 5.1-channel package

POSITIONING: Successor to the 2000i Cinema Pack

PEERS: Wharfedale Diamond 220 HCP; Mission M3



The 3000 speakers use new Ring Dome tweeters and paper/Aramid midbass divers



Not a fan of the Walnut finish? Graphite, gloss and leather are options

ease and composure no matter where the volume dial's pointing. Nothing sounds forced or artificial.

During *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (Blu-ray) the system kept my disbelief firmly suspended as it plunged me into the period-jumping plot. I've never been caught in a battle between mutants and 20-feet-tall robots, but I'm certain this system has it pretty much spot-on.

Its forte is detail. The enhanced tweeters are the most articulate and insightful Q Acoustics has created, and their wide dispersion means you don't have to sit dead

> 'Try though I might I really can't find fault with this new 3000 package. At £700 it's an absolute steal'

centre, or toe in the fronts, to experience them. They tease out subtleties that you normally have to spend a lot more than £700 to hear, and there's never any suggestion of brashness.

When the Sentinels track down the X-Men at the start of the movie, the soundstage sparkles with hissing fire, tinkling ice and crackling electricity as Blink opens a portal. Dialogue is laced with texture too – the seductive husk and sibilance in Patrick Stewart's unmistakable voice grounds it in reality and keeps you absorbed.

Thankfully all this refinement doesn't come at the expense of entertainment. The system's superb dynamics bring effortless excitement and drama. It bites harder than Luis Suarez, making gunshots snap and explosions hit hard. Even the iconic 20th Century Fox theme gets the adrenalin flowing with its piercing snare rolls and incisive brass stabs.

There's a bit early in the movie when Hank, Logan and Xavier visit Quicksilver's basement and find him batting a ping pong ball back and forth. The sound of the ball clacking between the left front and surround speakers made me spin round to see what it was, even though I knew it was coming. That's testament to the 3010's impressive clarity and attack.

There's excellent scale, too. My room was filled with big bangs and crashes, as well as deep, meaty bass – the dual-driver subwoofer shares the agility, punch and watertight integration of its forebear and is impressive for the price.

The soundstage is spacious and layered. Even the busiest scenes boast clearly separated effects and tonal uniformity between channels. This isn't just a wall of sound, there's real light and shade amid the carnage.

This winning concoction of depth, dynamics and detail also works perfectly in a musical context. The impeccably-produced summer funk of Daft Punk's *Get Lucky* sounds more polished and full-bodied than ever through these drivers. The fat drums, nimble bassline and sharp snare hits compel your foot to tap, while the speakers' innate rhythmic ability keeps Nile Rodgers' iconic guitar in the pocket.

Most impressively, it was streamed from Spotify on a smartphone, underlining the system's ability to make any source material sound good. Step up to hi-res files and it shines even brighter.

All-round improvement

Try though I might, I really can't fault this new 3000 package. The revamped cabinets and drivers bring improvements over the 2000i, resulting in a sweeter, punchier and more articulate performance than its esteemed predecessor. Its transparency and unfussy, unflappable nature means you don't have to worry too much about partnering gear or positioning, and it makes the most of any source material.

Had this level of performance and build been delivered by a system costing twice as much, I'd be impressed but not surprised. At £700 it's an absolute steal ■

Specifications

Q ACOUSTICS 3010
DRIVE UNITS: 4in Aramid fibre/paper mid/bass driver; 1in Concentric Ring Dome tweeter
ENCLOSURE: 2-way reflex
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 68Hz-22kHz
SENSITIVITY: 86dB
POWER HANDLING: 75W
DIMENSIONS: 150(w) x 235(h) x 200(d)mm
WEIGHT: 3.6kg

Q ACOUSTICS 3090C
DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 4in Aramid fibre/paper mid/bass drivers; 1in Concentric Ring Dome tweeter
ENCLOSURE: 2-way reflex
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 75Hz-22kHz
SENSITIVITY: 89dB
POWER HANDLING: 100W
DIMENSIONS: 430(w) x 150(h) x 200(d)mm
WEIGHT: 6kg

Q ACOUSTICS 3070S (SUBWOOFER)
DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 6.5in bass drivers
ENCLOSURE: Ported
LOW FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 50Hz-150Hz
ON BOARD POWER: 140W
REMOTE CONTROL: No
DIMENSIONS: 200(w) x 400(h) x 425(d)mm
WEIGHT: 13.6kg
CONNECTIONS: Stereo line-level input

HCC Verdict



Q Acoustics 3000 5.1
➜ £700 approx ➜ www.qacoustics.co.uk
➜ Tel: 01279 501111

HIGHS: Outstanding detail, dynamics and scale; natural, transparent sound makes any source material shine; excellent integration and bite; solid build and nice design

LOWS: Subwoofer might not satisfy hardcore bassheads in terms of depth; slightly awkward speaker terminals; glossy finishes cost more

Performance ★★★★★
Design ★★★★½
Features ★★★★½
Overall ★★★★★

FrontRow™
CINEMA SEATING FOR THE HOME

Never has top quality home cinema seating been so affordable



Now available - full sized templates











FrontRow™ Classic Seating from £685.00

- Modular design for curved and straight seating configurations
- Large Range of Fabrics and Leather options
- Black leather available from stock
- Optional drinks trays and cup holders

NEW!









FrontRow™ Modern Seating

- Straight and corner configurations
- Full Leather or Fabric
- Large selection of colours
- Two tone colour options
- Manual or electric recliners
- Adjustable headrests
- Prices from £510.00

All FrontRow™ seating include a space-maximising inclining mechanism that allows seating to be placed close to a wall and include a comprehensive 5 year warranty including accidental damage. A free design service is available to ensure the seating configuration is suitable for your room.

For further information please call: 01892 552561 or visit www.frontrow-seating.co.uk

FrontRow™ Home Cinema Seating, 69 London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0PA

CALL FOR ACTION!

01784 470881



Customelectronicdesign

• Smart Home Solutions • Home Cinema • Hi-Fi • Lighting

• **www.customelectronicdesign.co.uk** • **Open Mon–Fri 10–6**

• Kaleidescape • Oppo
• Anthem Statement • Arcam • Datasat • Denon
• Samsung • Sim2 • Sony
• Stewart • Screen Innovations • Vutec
• Amina • Dynaudio • Focal • PMC • Totem
• Paradigm • Velodyne • Crestron
• ProControl • Quadral • Brodmann

• Design • Supply • Installation • Support

11 Charter Place, High Street, Egham, Surrey TW20 9EA

Portable projectors

You can still get a big image – plus multimedia talents – from a projector small enough to put in your pocket. **Steve May** auditions are quartet of compact contenders



ASUS S1
A £300 bargain or a budget flop?

OPTOMA ML750E
App-ready and impressively featured

PHILIPS PICOPIX PPX3614
Easy on the eye and the wallet

VIEWSONIC PLED-VW800
The priciest model here – will it also be the best?

Asus S1

Killer looks? Check. Killer price tag? Ditto. Now all it needs is a killer performance...



THE ASUS S1 may be cheap as chips (typically less than £300 if you click around) but looks properly gorgeous. With its high-tech titanium-silver finish and designer curves, it could be mistaken for something you'd pick up in the Stark Industries staff shop, and weighing a mere 342g, it's small enough to pop in the slimmest of jacket pockets.

For enhanced usability, a built-in 6,000mAh battery is able to provide between two and three hours usage, which could make for plenty of flickering fun during summer BBQ parties.

Unsurprisingly for such a small beamer, there's relatively limited connectivity on offer. You get just a single HDMI/MHL input and USB port. Be warned, the latter is only for recharging your mobile devices; it doesn't provide media playback facilities on its own. There's also a headphone jack.

To help get an ideally-framed image, there's a standard tripod bush on the bottom of the projector. The lens itself is protected behind a manually sliding cover.

Of course, that bargain-basement price tag has implications. There's no remote handset supplied. Everything is controlled via somewhat fiddly soft-touch buttons on the top of the box. Asus has included a carry bag plus HDMI and USB cables, though.

Easy-peasy lemon-squeasy

The S1 is literally plug and play. Menu options are simpler than Pot Noodle instructions, offering just brightness and contrast control (the effects of which are marginal to be honest). There's no zoom to experiment with here. Operational fan noise is low, with just a consistent 28dB hum to contend with in Battery mode, jumping to 32dB in Standard.

Don't be too put off by the projector's 200 Lumens brightness rating. This short-throwing portable casts a vivid 40in picture from just 1m, and pushed back to 1.5m will cast a picture roughly the same size across; the throw ratio is 1.1. While you may be tempted to stretch its image even larger if space allows, the limited pixel structure quickly becomes horribly intrusive. Native resolution of the S1 is just WVGA 854 x 480, with contrast pegged to 1,000:1.

> 'If you want a pocket projector that you can take anywhere then the S1 is worthy of your consideration'

Colours delivered by this Asus are vivid if not always convincingly natural. There are four picture modes: Battery, Presentation, Theater and Standard. For most home entertainment sources, you'll want to keep the S1 to its Theater preset. This avoids unwanted colour casts. The mode works well for a quick blast of bigscreen action, and is ideal for impromptu gaming sessions when your next house party runs out of fizzy pop.

I noticed some characteristic DLP rainbow flashing on high-contrast video material, which could be an issue if you're particularly sensitive.

Those wanting to get dual usage, with presentations and suchlike, will find text and graphics serviceable. Like all LED projectors, you get nearly Instant On, while the light source is rated at a generous 30,000 hours.

Considering the dimensions of the S1, the onboard mono 2W sound system, dubbed ASUS SonicMaster, is surprisingly effective in terms of clarity if not overall volume. Sit close enough in a quiet room and you'll certainly find it adequate enough to raise a goosebump or two when watching *The Babadook*, or Alex Jones on *The One Show*.

Overall, it's difficult not to like the S1. If you want a pocket projector that you can take anywhere, and intend to use with HDMI or MHL mobile devices, then the S1 is worth auditioning. The lack of a remote zapper proves a bit inconvenient, and if your aim is to watch movies on a budget projector screen or tidy white wall, limitations in picture fidelity could be a deal breaker.

Specifications

3D: No
RESOLUTION: 854 x 480 (WVGA)
CONNECTIONS: HDMI/MHL; USB; minijack audio output
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): 200 Lumens
CONTRAST RATIO (CLAIMED): 1,000:1
DIMENSIONS: 110.5(w) x 30.7(h) x 102(d)mm
WEIGHT: 342g
FEATURES: 0.3in DLP DMD; USB mobile device recharging; SonicMaster 2W audio system; 30,000 hours LED life (claimed); Battery, Presentation, Theater and Standard picture modes; three-hour battery life; tripod socket

Optoma ML750e

There's no onboard battery here, but this smallscale PJ is still a decent portable option



SQUARE BUT CERTAINLY not fuddy-duddy, the DLP-based Optoma ML750e is a lightweight 380g and boasts a broad-based feature set designed to satisfy both power users and home viewers. An LED model, it employs a single 0.45in WXGA DMD chip, which has a native 16:10 aspect ratio.

Versatility is probably this small-form projector's biggest draw. You'll be up and screening in minutes, and it works with pretty much any device. There's a manual focus lever up top, alongside a little block of on-body controls. Vertical keystone correction is offered.

Connections comprise HDMI with MHL support for mobile devices, a universal AV port which can be used with a supplied VGA adaptor cable, microSD card reader (handy) and USB port. 1.5GB of onboard memory means you can run videos, photos, Office documents and PDFs without needing to hook up a laptop.

The projector is bundled with a basic credit card remote control, but it's not particularly responsive. With an optional £30 WU5205 Wi-Fi USB dongle, you can also share content with a mobile device running the brand's EZ View app.

Optoma quotes a relatively high 700 Lumens output. Generally speaking, comparing light output specs on LED projectors is largely unhelpful, as they tend to be apples and oranges in the real world. The good news is that I found the ML750e bright enough to throw a picture upwards of 2m across. This translates to an impressive 21:9 image when the projector is hooked up to a Blu-ray player – I cued up some choice moments from *Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* and could happily have watched the whole movie. Native resolution is 1,280 x 800, so you can just about get away with images this size.

Dim the lights

Unsurprisingly, when it comes to movie watching and gameplay, the projector looks its best in a darkened room. Colour fidelity is good, with reds only slightly violet skewed. The ML750e is an update on Optoma's original ML750, offering better contrast, up to 15,000:1 from 10,000:1. The manufacturer claims a conservative 20,000-hour lifespan for its LED engine, somewhat less than rivals. The little beamer also promises compatibility with DLP 3D link tech, although this wasn't tested.

The onboard sound system is best thought of as functional; it'll do the job if you need to make a noise, but it's not something I'd recommend for long periods of time. On the plus side, the sound system effectively masks the low-level 30dB operating noise.

Optoma's user interface offers bare-bones simplicity. Preset display modes comprise Cinema, Photo and Bright. The best general purpose option proves, unsurprisingly, to be the Cinema mode, as all the others suffer from an unpleasant white balance and send the onboard fan into hyperdrive.

There is no onboard battery, so your enjoyment is limited to wherever you can find a mains supply. This makes the ML750e not strictly a Pico projector – the ability to run off a rechargeable battery is a useful way to define the category – more an ultra-portable (it's a shade over 10cm wide).

While the main UI is basic, the ML750e's USB media reader refreshingly employs some jazzy graphics for its Photo, Video, Music and Office Viewer. The projector can handle most file formats likely to come its way. There's video support for AVI, WMV, MP4 and 720p MKVs, while audio playback covers MP3 and AAC. The Office Viewer handles .doc and .ppt files. The microSD card slot can run JPEG images in a slideshow.

Price/performance pay off

This Optoma is a respectable all-rounder, although in competition it tends to fall between the somewhat more visually satisfying (and admittedly more expensive) Viewsonic elsewhere in this grouptest and smaller Picos when it comes to balancing price and performance.

Specifications

3D: Yes, via optional DLP 3D link
RESOLUTION: 1,280 x 800 (WXGA)
CONNECTIONS: HDMI/MHL; universal AV port (with a supplied VGA adaptor cable); microSD card reader; USB
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): 700 Lumens
CONTRAST RATIO (CLAIMED): 15,000:1
DIMENSIONS: 105(w) x 39(h) x 106(d)mm
WEIGHT: 380g
FEATURES: Content-sharing (audio, video, image, documents) via EZ View app; 20,000 hours LED life (claimed); vertical keystone correction; onboard 1W speaker; 1.5:1 throw ratio; 30dB fan noise; media player

Philips PicoPix PPX3614

This Android-flavoured tiddler packs a surprisingly potent picture performance



THE PHILIPS PPX3614 may be the lightest projector in our pocketable roundup, at just 280g, but it boasts a heavyweight portfolio of features and some neat functionality. Indeed, a cursory glance at the specifications sheet might suggest that this is the pocket rocket everyone else has to beat. Business presentations, pop-up cinema, portable arcade... it can do them all.

Connectivity runs to a mini HDMI input (an adaptor cable is provided in the box, along with a carry case), plus USB, SD card reader, USB mini port and a 3.5mm headphone jack. The lack of a full-size HDMI port is a bit of bind in truth, because if you misplace the supplied adaptor lead you'll be seriously inconvenienced. So don't.

Wi-Fi is integrated. Simply activate the Wi-Fi hotspot on the projector and your mobile device, running a DLNA app, will see it as a media renderer.

A touch of class

This PicoPix ships with a simple infra-red credit card-style remote, but you can also get hands-on via a laptop-esque touchpad on the top of the unit. This is a novel control addition for any projector, although it's more likely to find favour with travelling salesmen running presentations than home projectionists.

The PicoPix rivals the Asus S1 for innate transportability, and sports a convenient tripod bush on its undercarriage for elevation and positioning. It's worth pointing out that the projector is so light, it will likely be wrestled out of position by any well-made HDMI cable with a kink in it. Installation is aided by vertical keystone correction.

The PJ is well qualified for life on the road or in the boardroom. From USB, it'll read all your key Office documents, including PDF, ppt/pptx, excel and .docs, while the projector's onboard 1800mAh lithium ion battery will provide enough juice for around two hours. This is enough for a powerpoint or two, just don't plan on watching *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, else you'll miss the surprise, emotional ending.

Helpfully, the onboard USB media reader doesn't just do the serious stuff. It's compatible with a wide range of multimedia files, including MPEG, XVID and H.263/H.264 video, plus an assortment of audio (MP3, WAV, Ogg, FLAC, AAC) and JPEG, BMP, PNG and GIF image codes and formats. Entertainment shouldn't prove a problem.

Beneath the hood, the projector runs a version of the Android OS (v2.3.1). There's also 4GB of internal memory, which is plenty of room for both office documents and some telly to watch in your hotel room (remember to ask for a suite with large white walls...).

Don't be fooled by numbers

Native resolution of the PicoPix is limited to 854 x 480, and brightness is rated at a paltry 140 Lumens. If you run the projector off its internal battery, this drops to just 70. However, these meagre specs don't really do this Philips justice. The LED light engine is astonishingly bright and vivid. Colours positively throb with psychedelic saturation.

Specifications

3D: No
RESOLUTION: 854 x 480 (WVGA)
CONNECTIONS: Mini HDMI/MHL; USB; SD card reader; USB 2 mini port; 3.5mm headphone jack
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): 140 Lumens
CONTRAST RATIO (CLAIMED): 1,000:1
DIMENSIONS: 110.5(w) x 30.7(h) x 102(d)mm
WEIGHT: 284g
FEATURES: Touchpad control and remote; 30,000 hours LED life (claimed); integrated Wi-Fi; Android operating system; media playback via DLNA, USB and SD card; vertical keystone correction

The PPX3614 supports resolutions up to 1080p, but just downscales them. Like the Asus S1, contrast is rated at 1,000:1, yet still looks relatively punchy. I fed in CGI toon *The Lorax*, and it arrived defiantly, deliciously vibrant. Philips has somehow eked a premium performance out of the most modest of specifications.

I easily achieved a screen size of around 100in running on mains power. Naturally, if you try and go much beyond that the lack of real image definition starts to take its toll. Still, this in itself is pretty impressive; you can go large with games consoles and mobile devices at the drop of a hat.

There's a sound system onboard, too. Its rated at 1W and is rather squawky. But potential buyers shouldn't let this minor limitation put them off, because when it comes to sheer bang for buck (this retails for around £350), the Philips PPX3614 is a high-value brawler that takes some beating.

>

PURE®
THEATRE

BRING YOUR ROOM TO LIFE AND EXPERIENCE THE ULTIMATE IN BIG SCREEN HOME ENTERTAINMENT. WHETHER IT'S MOVIES, GAMING, SPORT OR TV YOU CAN WATCH IT ALL IN AMAZING FULL HD & 4K

HOME CINEMA EVOLVED







Pure Theatre™ is a British company based in Shropshire, specialising in the design and manufacture of state of the art home cinema products, here in the United Kingdom.

Modern projectors in Full HD, 3D and 4K allow for large screen sizes. Recent advances in technology make projectors bright, whilst providing a long life span, making them perfect for watching TV, gaming and movies.

Call 01952 898 522 or visit puretheatre.com

puretheatreuk

@Pure_Theatre

Viewsonic PLED-VW800

This grown-up model outguns the competition when it comes to setup and image flexibility



THE VIEWSONIC PLED-VW800 is arguably the best-specified of all the current ultra-compact DLP LED projectors. If you're looking for a bigscreen solution that's portable enough to take away on holiday, yet still stage a convincing movie night, it warrants fast-tracking onto your short list.

It is marginally larger than the real minis of the breed, and tips the scales at a still manageable 830g. Like its Optoma rival, it sports a useful native WXGA resolution of 1,200 x 800 pixels. The PJ's LED light engine is rated at an indefatigable 30,000 hours.

Connectivity is helpfully varied. There's an HDMI input with MHL support for mobile devices, plus PC D-Sub, minijack AV input, SD card reader, powered USB port and 3.5mm audio minijack out. To help you fine-tune positioning and orientation, there's a tripod mount on the base. But with no onboard rechargeable battery, you are tethered to the mains supply.

The sound system, delivered via stereo speakers, is bold enough for passing the time with casual games, but you'll probably want to hook up a more meaningful alternative. There are three modes to experiment with: Speech, Entertainment and Standard. It helps that the speakers are rear-facing, as the projector is almost certainly going to be parked in front of the viewing position.

On-body controls offer a full fist of functionality, should you misplace the (almost full-sized) IR zapper, which in itself is something of a luxury for this calibre of projector. While there's no Wi-Fi built-in, you can add it with an optional USB dongle. The PJ-WPD-200 (expensive at £50) can connect wirelessly with a smartphone or tablet to stream content. All you need is a UPnP media streaming app (there are plenty around) for multimedia playback. The

> 'The PLED-VW800 is a corking portable projector with a strong feature set and bright, sharp images'

projector's USB and card reader are limited to photos. If you need somewhere to store images, there's 2GB of onboard memory.

Bright star

The PLED-VW800 is rated at 800 Lumens. While not overly bright in the world of full-size home theatre projectors, for diddy LED projectors it makes it quite the light cannon. You can comfortably craft a 2m diagonal image without sacrificing visual punch, although if you're watching a movie you'll want to be in a darkened room. The resolution on hand is enough to offer a pleasingly filmic 720p viewing experience.

Colour fidelity is surprisingly good, looking particularly authentic with reds and blues. Contrast is a tad limited though, with shadow detail often smudging out. The projector is officially rated at 120,000:1 (dynamic). Go easy with the contrast control. Ramp up more than halfway and you blow out whites and lose detail. Conversely if you tighten up you'll end up crushing the black level.

Setup routines are more helpful than most. There are five picture patterns provided to help align your picture, with a manual focus knob and zoom on hand to snap the image into sharp relief.

Image options include an adjustable overscan and a variety of colour presets (Movie, Dynamic, Viewmatch, Brightest, PC), in addition to brightness, sharpness and gamma.

Operational noise is a relatively high 34dB, dropping to 32dB in Eco mode. The low-level fan whoosh is best disguised by an off-board audio system. Bundled niceties include an HDMI cable and cutesy carry bag.

Viewsonic's PLED-W800 is, overall, a corking connected portable with a strong feature set. Images are bright and sharp, and help counter its bigger size and bigger price tag, not to mention the integrated Wi-Fi offered by some if its rivals.

Specifications

3D: No
RESOLUTION: 1,200 x 800 (WXGA)
CONNECTIONS: HDMI/MHL; PC D-Sub VGA; USB; SD card; 3.5mm audio output; minijack AV input
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): 800 Lumens
CONTRAST RATIO (CLAIMED): 120,000:1
DIMENSIONS: 175(w) x 51.5(h) x 138(d)mm
WEIGHT: 830g
FEATURES: 2GB in-built memory; SuperColor technology; SonicMode sound system; media player; manual focus and zoom; 30,000 hours LED life (claimed)

Final standings

MANY OF THE familiar and accepted rules of projection don't apply in the weird and wonderful world of lamp-free Picos and ultra portables. You tend to know where you are with conventional home cinema PJs – Full HD image quality is a prerequisite and brightness and contrast generally tends to be measured in big numbers. But that's not the case with these compacts. The latest LED light engines behave differently from conventional lamps; there's an intensity to their performance which belies the modest specs, making them often seem twice as bright again as a similarly specified be-lamped PJ.

Multifunctionality is another key attribute of these diddy divas. Pop a projector in your pocket or briefcase, and it's going to be just as useful presenting office documents as video downloads. They shine with different sources too. While you can lace up a conventional Blu-ray deck or set-top box, they're probably better driven by a streaming stick like Amazon Fire, Roku, or Chromecast (see right). Welcome to a new age of connected home cinema.

And the winner is...

There may not appear to be a great deal separating the ultra-compact projector brigade, but in our shoot-out a clear hierarchy emerged. It's worth pointing out that all models performed well. The days of dull, ineffective portables appear long gone.

The battery-less Optoma ML750e ranks a joint third, not because it's particularly flawed, but because our top twosome are more compelling. Joining it on the third step is the improbably cheap Asus S1. This shiny DLP LED model could be just the ticket if you want to combine on-road presentations with a bit of *bijou* box-office action, for a bargain price.

Edging into second place is the affordable PicoPix PPX3614. Philips' tiny titan combines a wonderfully rich and lairy image with a multifunctional feature set. However, abrasive audio denies it the top billing.

Our compact champion, then, is Viewsonic's PLED-W800. With an AV performance bright and sharp enough for a satisfying movie session, and brilliant portability and media talents for £500, it's a clear winner ■

Get stuck in to media



HDMI heroes: These portable PJs are a natural fit for portable sources, and by that we mean diminutive media players rather than compact BD spinners. A new trend amongst the former is the HDMI Stick, which – as the name suggests – is a media streamer in dinky stick form with an HDMI interface. Whack one into the input on your projector (or TV), connect via Wi-Fi and away you go.

Chromecast: Available for £30, this Google gadget ships without physical remote – the idea being that the device from which you are 'casting' media to it (smartphone, tablet, laptop) acts as your point of control. App support is growing – Netflix, BBC iPlayer, BT Sport and Blinkbox Movies/ Music are all offered.

Roku: Roku's Streaming Stick (£40) can be controlled via a simple handheld remote (which is very useful) or app. The interface is a little clunky, but you get access to up to 500 'channels' (some subscription-based, some free), including BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Now TV, Spotify and TuneIn radio.

Amazon: The newly-launched £35 Fire Stick packs a potent dual-core processor into its slinky body, comes with a physical remote and offers the usual app roster. It works best if you're an Amazon Cloud/Prime aficionado – come back next issue for our full review...

HCC Verdict



Asus S1
➜ £300 approx
➜ www.asus.com
➜ Tel: 01442 265548
HIGHS: Cool metallic design; decent battery life; vivid picture quality; supremely portable
LOWS: Limited connectivity; no remote control; no USB media playback; no integrated Wi-Fi

Performance ★★★½☆
Design ★★★★★
Features ★★★½☆
Overall ★★★★☆

HCC Verdict



Optoma ML750e
➜ £400 approx
➜ www.optoma.co.uk
➜ Tel: 01923 691 800
HIGHS: WXGA resolution; lush colour performance; good video file support
LOWS: Generally poor picture presets; average audio performance; limited 1.5GB of in-built memory; no battery option

Performance ★★★½☆
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★★★☆
Overall ★★★★☆

HCC Verdict



Philips PicoPix PPX3614
➜ £350 approx
➜ www.philips.co.uk
➜ Tel: 0845 0900315
HIGHS: Superlight projector; vivid colour performance; integrated Wi-Fi; good multimedia file support; 4GB in-built memory
LOWS: Mini HDMI input; poor audio quality

Performance ★★★★☆
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★★★½
Overall ★★★★☆

HCC Verdict



Viewsonic PLED-W800
➜ £500 approx
➜ www.viewsoniceurope.com/uk
➜ Tel: 0207 382 8250
HIGHS: WXGA resolution; relatively high brightness; extensive controls
LOWS: No integrated Wi-Fi (and the optional dongle's overpriced); limited contrast range; rivals are lighter and more compact

Performance ★★★★½
Design ★★★★½
Features ★★★★☆
Overall ★★★★½



4K makes a fumble

Samsung's mid-priced 48in UHD TV gets most things right, but **John Archer** finds it falling at the crucial resolution hurdle

AV Info

PRODUCT:
48in 4K/UHD TV

POSITION:
The top-level flat TV in Samsung's 2015 range. Three curved models – including two HDR sets – sit above it

PEERS:
Panasonic TX-50AX802; LG 55UB850V

SAMSUNG HAS ALREADY set the 2015 TV world alight with the High Dynamic Range (HDR) glories of its UE65JS9500 LCD/LED flagship screen (reviewed in *HCC* #246). Sadly, though, the £6,000 price tag attached to that ground-breaking TV makes it nothing more than a pipe dream for most AV fans. Cue the £1,400 Samsung UE48JU7000, which preserves some of the key features of the JS9500 series for just a fraction of the price. Let's be honest – this is a 4K screen that many more people will seriously consider buying. There's even a 40in version for the space-constrained 4K fan.

The key shared features I'm talking about are a native 3,840 x 2,160 resolution, Samsung's PurColour technology for enhanced colour resolution, a direct LED backlight system with local dimming, and Samsung's new powered-by-Tizen Smart system, which streamlines the interface compared to last year while retaining the content richness. All told, this is a seriously strong feature roster by any standards – so what doesn't it have that the JS9500 models do?

Flat is back

Well, it isn't curved, for starters, which may or may not bother you. Personally, I think this new on-trend form factor is suited to screens above 65in, so its absence here is no concern.

A bigger issue is its lack of HDR talents. The screen used doesn't offer the peak brightness (around 1,000 Nits) or Nano Crystal colour dynamics of the JS9500 series, and so its images never get close to the brilliant – in every sense of the word – images delivered by those TVs. But, of course, foregoing HDR-readiness and fully 17 inches of screen size to secure the still healthy feature list of the UE48JU7000 will look like a very fair trade in return for a saving of well over £4,000. As long, of course,

as it makes the most of the features it does have.

Looks-wise, the UE48JU7000 just isn't as pretty as Samsung's step-up TVs. It shares the chamfered frame of the JS9500, but a cheaper-looking, darker grey finish reduces the impact of this chamfering to the point where you don't really notice it. Build quality is fine, but not premium.

One bit of good aesthetic news, though, is the way many of the set's connections are found on an external One Connect box that connects to the TV by a single, tidy cable. Oddly, though, this 'Mini' One Connect

> 'Upscaling of hi-def content to the panel's 4K resolution is outstanding, as is colour handling'

doesn't include the set's twin Freesat and twin Freeview HD tuners, and since it doesn't contain the TV's quad-core processors it also can't be swapped out in the future to update the UE48JU7000's features and connectivity. This is something you can do with the full One Connect offered with Samsung's pricier screens.

The screen comes with two remotes – a standard zapper and a largely button-free clicker which will be your main port of call.

First impressions

With a little judicious use of its rich selection of calibration tools (tweakers can immerse themselves in everything from backlight adjustment to 10-point white balance control), the UE48JU7000 initially makes its £1,400 ticket look like a serious bargain.

For instance, its direct LED lighting (where the lights sit directly behind the screen rather than around its edges) helps it deliver a superb contrast range. This is founded on gorgeously deep black levels of the sort that once used to be the exclusive preserve of plasma TVs, but crucially the inky blacks share the frame with impressive punchy colours and white tones. This works wonders with the contrast-rich night-time shots of Memphis in Ridley Scott's *Exodus: Gods & Kings*.

And the UE48JU7000 leaves the vast majority of the competition trailing with its colour handling. The shots of the Nile river running red with blood from countless crocodile attacks are rendered with a stunning combination of almost visceral colour intensity and terrific subtlety, thanks to a combination of the screen's UHD resolution and Samsung's PurColour system.

Images are bright, too, by typical LCD standards – something which helps the screen retain more colour tone accuracy than usual during dark scenes.

Also outstanding is the 48JU7000's upscaling of the high-definition content you'll still have to watch for most of the time while we wait for more native UHD sources. This adds all the millions of extra pixels required by the HD-to-UHD conversion process without exaggerating source noise, without making edges look stressed (despite the screen's extreme contrast) and without making grain look unnatural and meshy. This deft source handling is a major strength.

Feeding in *The Life Of Pi* in native UHD from a Samsung UHD Video Pack, though, confirms the existence of a fairly serious picture quality flaw I'd also noticed while watching the *Exodus* Blu-ray. While the UE48JU7000 renders relatively static 4K footage, such as *Life of Pi*'s early zoo montage, with that gorgeous combination of extra depth, extra detail, extra density and extra colour resolution we've come to expect from UHD TVs (even relatively small ones like the UE48JU7000), the clarity takes a disturbing hit when there's much movement in the frame.

During Pi's tussles with the tiger on the lifeboat, for instance, all the moving parts of the image not only lose resolution but also exhibit signs of smearing and trailing that significantly diminish the 4K effect. None of the provided motion processing controls satisfactorily solve this problem, and the issue remains regardless of whether you're watching UHD, HD or standard-definition.

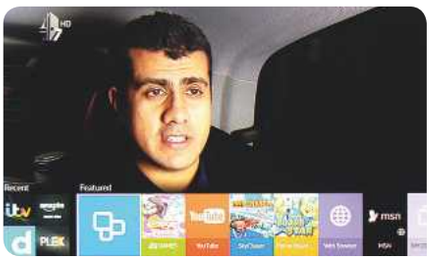
The only time I didn't feel distracted by motion blur, oddly, was when watching 3D, which actually looks pretty spectacular by 48in TV standards. The screen's brightness, contrast and colour intensity, and Samsung's persistence with the pixel-retaining Active format, pay dividends. I've seldom if ever seen *Exodus* and *The Life Of Pi* looking so intense and natural in 3D on a non-HDR TV. There's a touch of crosstalk, but it's not severe enough to diminish a classy 3D effort.

Joining the UE48JU7000's pictures is a respectable audio performance that scores highly for detail and vocal clarity, but lacks bass compared with the best-sounding TVs. And, during boisterous moments during *Exodus*, like the closing of the Red Sea, everything sounds a bit compressed.

Caveat to consider

When details of Samsung's 2015 TV range first appeared we picked out the JU7000 series as potentially a real highlight. But if other JU7000 sizes can't put right the motion flaws so apparent on this 48in model, the series could sadly turn into one of the year's biggest disappointments. Its price tag and accommodating size will surely tempt many, and in many areas its imagery excels, but it's far from perfect ■

On the menu



→ The user interface, now driven by Samsung's own Tizen OS, is super-slick, with a bottom-edge content tab highlighting apps and user options

Specifications

3D: Yes. Active
4K: Yes. 3,840 x 2,160
TUNER: Yes. 2 x Freeview HD and 2 x Freesat HD
CONNECTIONS: HDMI x 4; USB x 3; Freesat and Freeview tuner inputs; optical digital audio output; composite video input; component video input
SOUND: 20W
BRIGHTNESS (CLAIMED): N/A
CONTRAST RATIO (CLAIMED): N/A
DIMENSIONS (OFF STAND): 1,087(w) x 631(h) x 68(d)mm
WEIGHT (OFF STAND): 12.6kg
FEATURES: Direct LED lighting with local dimming; 1300 PQI (1,300Hz emulation); Game mode; BBC iPlayer/ITV Player/4OD/Demand 5 catch-up support; Netflix and Amazon 4K streaming support; Tizen-based Smart TV interface, point and click remote control; PurColour processing

HCC Verdict



Samsung UE48JU7000
→ £1,400 approx → www.samsung.co.uk
→ Tel: 0330 726 7864
HIGHS: Superb contrast performance; outstanding colours; good Smart features; impressive Active 3D
LOWS: Distracting motion blur; minor 3D crosstalk; One Connect box can't be upgraded

Performance ★★★½☆
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★★★½
Overall ★★★½☆



Movie madman with an audiophile heart

This nine-channel Dolby Atmos AVR is a blindingly good listen, enthuses **Steve May**. But there's devil in the detail

AV Info

PRODUCT:
Nine-channel Dolby Atmos-capable AV receiver

POSITION:
Second in line to the throne of Yamaha's Aventage line

PEERS:
Denon AVR-X5200W; Onkyo TX-NR3010

IT'S EASY TO forget that Yamaha effectively invented the home cinema receiver market. When screens were square and multichannel audio was young and frisky, it pioneered with monster AV receivers that became things of legend. Back then, DSP was Definitely Something Profound, and Yamaha wrote the rulebook on soundfield design.

Today legends are not so easily made. But that pedigree clearly lives on in the brand's Aventage line of upmarket noise-makers. The RX-A2040 sits somewhere near the top of this integrated lineup, its distinctive design standing out from the dour AVR mainstream.

Not that the Aventage range is distinguished purely by cosmetics. Yamaha invests top-line AV tech into these models, from a premium grade H-chassis design to a raft of painstakingly picked components.

As befits its premium positioning, build quality is excellent. The aluminium front panel ostensibly minimises noise and interference but in reality just looks lovely, while beneath the hood Yamaha has employed an anti-resonance frame with a rigid bottom to minimize vibration. Left and right channels are physically and electrically isolated, to improve channel separation. The undercarriage sports the Yamaha ART (Anti Resonance Technology) Wedge – a fifth central foot for improved stability.

Connectivity comprises the usual forest of HDMI and legacy connections. There are seven rear HDMI inputs, plus one front-facing with MHL support. You also get dual HDMI outputs. While most users would probably employ these for a screen and projector pairing in a dedicated room, there is provision for HDMI zone switching. Indeed, the RX-A2040 is well-suited to multiroom playback.

This is a nine-channel design that can be run in a variety of configurations, typically 5.1.4 or 7.1.2 if you're adopting Dolby Atmos, but also multizone if you want to utilise the extra



The remote looks classy, but suffers from a button overload

amplification for stereo duties in one or two other locations. I opted for a seven-channel surround configuration with two Atmos-enabled heights. Be aware that this model will not be able to support DTS:X when it arrives.

Streaming support

The receiver can be taken online via integrated Wi-Fi (there are pop-up aerials on the back) or wired Ethernet connection. Once networked, you can take advantage of subscription streaming services Napster and JUKE. Spotify Connect allows you to stream whatever you're listening to from your mobile. The receiver is also Apple AirPlay compliant.

The AVR will browse connected NAS and DLNA sources relatively quickly. File compatibility is fine, as long as your music collection isn't DSD (not supported either on USB or across a network, only via HDMI). MP3, FLAC, 24-bit/192kHz WAV and Apple Lossless are all handled, though. Gapless playback keeps things seamless.

> 'When an AVR compels you to revisit your favourite demo scenes you know it's doing something right'

Extra embellishments include a Music Enhancer mode for (any) PCM audio source. A high-sampling extension, up to 24-bit/96kHz, this would typically used with CD. It certainly doesn't impair fidelity, and may even add a frisson of extra air (yes, it's that subtle).

Setup is aided by a suite of YPAO calibration tools, including RSC (Reflected Sound Control) sound optimisation for 3D soundfields. You can measure for single or multi-position. Yamaha's auto calibration software is generally useful, although with two subs in play I felt its decision to deem my speakers 'Large' was a tad too literal for my liking. A bit of manual intervention mandated an 80Hz crossover, giving better balance.

There are no changes here to the UI from last season's models. The display is colourful but disappointingly low on resolution. This complaint isn't just aimed at Yamaha. While other home entertainment devices, from next-gen consoles to inexpensive streaming sticks, have the ability to deliver ultra crisp HD text and graphics, AV receivers are mostly unable to muster anything better than SD fuzz. For any device that aspires to be the hub of a modern AV system, the user experience is far too low-res.

Similarly, the remote handset is a horrible button-fest. It's worth noting, though, that there's a network interface which offers quick and easy setup configuration.

The rear-facing HDMI board supports 2.0 connectivity, with 4K/Ultra HD 50Hz/60Hz passthrough, as well as 4:4:4, 4:2:2 and 4:2:0 chroma sub-sampling. However, the AVR lacks HDCP 2.2 copy protection, which could have (as yet unexplained) implications for 4K/UHD Blu-ray and set-top box pay services, when they arrive. At worst, this means any HDCP 2.2 protected video will presumably have to be routed direct to a compliant display and not through the AVR.

In flight, the RX-A2040 proves downright entertaining; when an AVR compels you to revisit all your favourite demo pieces you know it's doing something right.

When Leonardo DiCaprio explains to Ellen Page how to be an architect in *Inception* (Blu-ray, DTS-HD MA 5.1), the landscape explodes in slow motion. LFE ripples as the soundstage splinters. It's a sequence I've seen many times, but the Yamaha thrills regardless. Dreamworld creation may be insane, but this receiver keeps a foothold in reality.

In episode 2 of *Daredevil* (Netflix 5.1), the astonishing *Raid*-like corridor brawl is painted with sharp, descriptive blows that emphasise the brutality of the sequence. Fittingly you can actually follow the action with your eyes closed. The receiver delivers crunching, realistic blows as DD's fists and feet find their target.

EX/ES post-processing will map a 5.1 audio mix to a full seven-channel surround layout. Generally this work wells, but can seem a little forced. For non-Atmos encoded software, the Surround encoder mode interpolates extra height information to create something akin to a sonic miasma.

The receiver ably demonstrates its audiophile credentials when fed 24-bit/192kHz hi-res audio. Claire Martin's jazzy reworking of *The Man Who Sold The World* (Linn Records FLAC Studio Master) plays with almost three-dimensional imaging. MP3s routed through the AVR's Hi-Res enhancer also have a weight and presence beyond what you might expect. The grinding drum and bass of Momoiro Clover Z's *Lost Child (Noisia)*, ripped from the clubland of tomorrow's Neo Tokyo, makes any bitrate banter moot.

Doesn't disappoint

Yamaha's RX-A2040 is a premium AV receiver from a brand bone-deep in home cinema. If you're looking for scale, immersion and drama, it doesn't disappoint, and that nine-channel design means that you don't need to sacrifice a traditional seven-channel surround array just to enjoy a taste of Dolby Atmos. It's also a terrific two-channel performer with plenty of appreciation for the formats and platforms the modern muso enjoys. There are caveats, not least the HDCP 2.2 issue and its stoic DTS:X incompatibility, but those are both future concerns and I still rate this an essential audition ■

On the menu



➜ The setup menus include graphical representations of your speaker configuration and are quite straightforward to use, but could do with a bit of visual spit and polish

Specifications

DOLBY ATMOS/TRUEHD: Yes
DTS-HD MASTER AUDIO: Yes
THX: No
MULTICHANNEL INPUT: Yes. 7.1
MULTICHANNEL OUTPUT (CLAIMED): 140W
MULTIROOM: Yes. 3 zone
AV INPUTS: 5 x composite (inc front); 6 x digital audio (3 x optical and 3 x coaxial)
HDMI: Yes. 7 x inputs; 2 x outputs (v2.0)
VIDEO UPSCALING: To 4K
COMPONENT VIDEO: Yes. 3 x inputs; 1 x output
DIMENSIONS: 435(w) x 192(h) x 467(d)mm
WEIGHT: 17kg
ALSO FEATURING: 32 Cinema DSP modes; Scene presets; web interface; YPAO audio calibration; DLNA/USB media playback; Ethernet; Wi-Fi; USB; AirPlay; Spotify Connect; Juke

HCC Verdict



Yamaha RX-A2040
➜ £1,500 approx ➜ www.uk.yamaha.com
➜ Tel: 0844 811 1116
HIGHS: Nine channels of amplification; fast, lively delivery; good connectivity
LOWS: No DSD support over the network or via USB; no HDCP 2.2 copy protection; over-complicated remote; retro user interface

Performance ★★★★½
Design ★★★★½
Features ★★★★☆
Overall ★★★★½

Black box with brawn

Southend-on-Sea is home to the world's longest pier – and some of its greatest-value subwoofers. **Adam Rayner** gets to grips with a sub-£500 12-incher from BK Electronics

I'VE REVIEWED A few high-end subwoofers recently, but this is a simple and affordable offering that is, in its own way, equally impressive.

The latest model from Essex-based bass stalwart BK Electronics, the P12-300SB is a sealed box, available in two flavours – either with its driver pointing out into your room from under a grille (the P12-300SB-FF) or, like the one on test, down-firing (P12-300SB-DF), with the enclosure stood up on small feet. This latter approach adds a layer of acoustic loading to the transducer's output.

The driver is a 12in paper pulp composite, with a heavy-duty chassis and monstrous magnet system on the back to give it a serious in/out excursion. It's driven by a healthy 300W of continual muscle and, according to BK's specs, should play to under 10Hz and still be audible.

The sealed box, hewn from 1in-thick MDF and with internal bracing, gives the driver good grounding. That lack of port air-bounce means that sealed bass systems play tighter. Also, there's no 'tuned' frequency to drop away from. Connections include both high and low-level inputs. The brief manual explains the benefits of using both simultaneously.



A front-firing version is also available

Back to the stars

I'm still returning to *Elysium* to give subwoofers a work out. I love it for its daftness and the deep, emotive basso drops and swells in the soundtrack, particularly during the initial scene where we see the young protagonist form a lifelong urge to reach the utopian habitat. My resident speakers are truly muscular and the sub-bass setup I normally employ has way more power and driver area than this BK Electronics model.

However, my speaker array was not let down one jot by P12-300. The speed of this woofer is startling – it's like a fast car with a big engine and yet terrifying brakes. The 12in driver's magnet stack helps it stop as well as go.

In the Matt Damon sci-fi there's plenty of rocketry, explosions and fights that let the subwoofer impress. But some of the more intense moments showed me that I had over-set the gain and found the woofer's limit. The P12-300 is fine until suddenly tipping into being over-driven. So be careful.

The film also has a tremendous score, large in scale and detailed, and bass is very much a part of it. This cubed brute makes astonishingly effective use of 'merely' 300W and handles it with texture and visceral grip.

Simply put, this is another BK Electronics benchmark product. It's quick, agile, usefully-connected and rich in output. My sample, in the gloss black finish, sells for £475, but if you're prepared to accept a less-glam wood finish (in various flavours) you can pick one up for £380. That makes the P12-300SB-DF even more of a no-brainer bargain ■

AV Info

PRODUCT: Affordable 12 subwoofer

POSITION: Mid-range for BK Electronics, below the Monolith but above the Gemini

PEERS: Tannoy TS2.12 Velodyne Impact 12; REL T-5

Specifications

DRIVE UNIT: 1 x 12in down-firing long-throw woofer
ENCLOSURE: Sealed
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 'Lower than 20Hz' at -3dB
ON BOARD POWER: 300 Watts RMS
REMOTE CONTROL: No
DIMENSIONS: 450(w) x 400(h) x 400(d)mm
WEIGHT: 30kg
CONNECTIONS: Twin phono input; single Neutrik Speakon connector for high-level (simultaneous) connection

HCC Verdict

BK Electronics P12-300SB-DF
→ £475 approx → www.bkelec.com
→ Tel: 01702 527 572

HIGHS: Has the grip and control of a way more costly woofer; musicality and visceral muscle on offer; nice price

LOWS: Easy to over-set gain and activate overdrive circuitry; not the last word in style

Performance ★★★★½
Design ★★★★☆
Features ★★★½☆
Overall ★★★★½

JVC

OUR PROJECTION OF THE FUTURE



Lift your viewing experience to new heights with the latest 2014 range of 3D enabled D-ILA Projectors from JVC.* Featuring an industry leading native contrast ratio of 150,000:1 and a dynamic contrast ratio of 1,500,000:1.**

Not only is the range designed for ultra-high 4K resolution and is 60p ready. It also has the new JVC e-Shift 3 technology, this means it can shift sub-frames to achieve 4 times the pixel density of the original content, bringing you an even greater level of definition.

Now in it's sixth generation, our D-ILA Projectors have always set new standards. Capable of delivering images of advanced quality with extreme realism and presence in your home cinema environment.

But after all seeing is believing, so to arrange a product demonstration email **hdworld@jvc.co.uk**
Or for more information visit: **www.jvc.co.uk**

DLA-X500R has been awarded:

avforums BEST BUY AWARD · Trusted Reviews RECOMMENDED · HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY · HDTVtest HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Best in Class

DLA-X700R has been awarded:

avforums HIGHLY RECOMMENDED AWARD · HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY

* The 2014 range of JVC D-ILA Projectors consists of model numbers DLA-X900R, DLA-X700R, DLA-X500R. Visit www.jvc.co.uk for more details. ** Contrast ratio specifications are for the DLA-X900R. 3840x2160 (4K e-shift3 – not native 4K).

Follow us on jvccuk @jvcuk

The dialogue diva

Adrian Justins auditions a soundbar/subwoofer partnership which promises to put movie and TV dialogue back on the centre stage



Polk has endowed the MagniFi with some curved design flourishes

POLK'S MAGNIFI LOOKS fairly unremarkable for a soundbar but has a reasonably impressive specification. With its pleasing low profile it can sit in front of most TVs without impairing your vision, it's made from good-quality materials and has nice rounded edges. It boasts a wireless sub, Dolby Digital-compatible optical input and analogue line in, and, while it lacks a display window, you can soon learn to interpret what the colours and sequences of the flashing LED array mean. It also offers Bluetooth with NFC pairing and CD-quality aptX support.

But there's even more to the MagniFi than meets the eye. Speaker whiz Polk has turned its attention to solving the thorny issue of dialogue intelligibility from soundbars, especially at moderate volume levels. This is often exacerbated by the growing trend for naturalistic, muttered dialogue that is sometimes so bad it can only be understood by the use of subtitles, without which you wouldn't have a clue what was said half the time in *Interstellar* or *The Wire*. So on board here is Voice Adjust Technology, which uses DSP to optimise the 200Hz-2kHz mid-range, paying particular attention to the dedicated centre channel of the bar's three-driver array.

As well as a regular volume control the credit-card sized remote has a voice adjustment feature that alters the timbre of dialogue as well as level. You can also increase or decrease the bass output, which affects subwoofer gain as well as the bar's own frequency response.

Reach for the Sky

Playing with the voice and bass controls can profoundly affect something as aurally anodyne as Sky News. Get the setting right and the bar is highly effective at delivering good strong dialogue, nicely balanced against the meaty whooshing noises that Sky employs whenever a correspondent joins the chat. With *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,* an upped bass level gives the score's strings real body and a thumping weight to a rocket explosion. Meanwhile, the Voice Adjust tool nicely lifts Gary Oldman's patter above a shouting crowd.

At the beginning of *The Wind Rises*, the MagniFi does a great job delivering distinct sounds such as footsteps on a roof, birds tweeting and a plane engine spluttering into life before it takes off. Yet cranking the volume reveals a harshness to the top end. Metallic sounds have a shrillness that grates slightly – the 'bar is much better at moderate volume.

Music streamed from my PC revealed good clarity and decent imaging. Chuck it some thumping techno music and you can enjoy the Polk's phenomenal power reserves.

It's not quite the last word in refinement and you do have to work at its settings to get the most out of it, but overall the MagniFi is a decent mid-range soundbar with good versatility thanks to those effective voice and bass tweak tools ■

AV Info

PRODUCT: Soundbar with wireless subwoofer

POSITION: Mid-range in Polk's soundbar stable

PEERS: Q Acoustics Media 4; Pioneer SBX-N500

Specifications

DRIVE UNITS: 3 x full-range drivers (25mm x 75mm)
AMPLIFICATION: 300W, including sub
CONNECTIONS: Optical digital audio input; 3.5mm input
DOLBY TRUEHD/DTS-HD MA: No/No
SEPARATE SUB: Yes. 7in downward-firing driver
REMOTE CONTROL: Yes
DIMENSIONS: 304(w) x 52(h) x 76(d)mm
WEIGHT: 2.2kg
FEATURES: Wall-mounting option; wireless subwoofer connection; Dolby Digital decoding; Bluetooth with aptX and NFC; Movie and Music DSP modes; Voice Adjust Technology; bass management; claimed frequency response of 40Hz-22kHz

HCC Verdict

Polk MagniFi
➜ £400 approx ➜ www.polkaudio.com
HIGHS: Neat, compact design; strong build quality; effective Vocal Adjust mode and stereo imaging; good detailing
LOWS: Subwoofer needs regular adjustment; no HDMI input; loses composure at high levels

Performance ★★★★☆
Design ★★★★½
Features ★★★★½
Overall ★★★★☆

HOME CINEMA









DESIGN SERVICE

- Award Winning Designer
- Room Design
- Acoustic Design

PRODUCT SUPPLY

- Projectors and Screens
- Audio Visual Equipment
- Control Systems

INSTALLATION

- Experienced Technicians
- Calibration

FAB HOME CINEMAS

FAB AV Unit 6 St Albans Enterprise Centre Long Spring St Albans AL3 6EN T 01727 226 121 E sales@fabhomecinemas.co.uk W www.fabav.co.uk

YAMAHA

Yamaha Digital Sound Projector 10th Anniversary

HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY

Yamaha Soundstage

Powerful, precise sound. Just plug and play.

SRT-1000

Bluetooth®

Feeling every wave. That's realism.

The SRT-1000 is Yamaha's first TV Sound Stage. It comes equipped with Yamaha's own Digital Sound Projector technology, large twin subwoofers mounted underneath as well as Bluetooth streaming and app control from your smart device. Just place your TV on top and enjoy industry leading surround sound.

For more info visit nl.yamaha.com



YAMAHA

Home Theater Controller App

Powered by music

Music machine in need of polish

This 'net radio has a few good strings to its bow, but **Mark Craven** wants a smoother experience

I'M PARTIAL TO the concept of a dedicated internet radio. These days the trend is towards using your Smart device to store/stream music in conjunction with a Bluetooth speaker, but taking your phone/tablet out of the equation can sometimes be liberating. However, the Encore, from new-to-the-UK American brand Grace Digital, suffers from such a painfully overwrought control experience from its top-panel buttons and supplied handset that you'll be downloading the free app for your smartphone as soon as you can.

Do that, and searching for radio stations (via its onboard Wi-Fi connection, the Encore can give you access to literally thousands) becomes easier. And, once you're bored of listening to Czech heavy metal, US talks shows or BBC Radio 4, you can bring your own music into the mix – there's USB and UPnP media playback offered, plus stereo analogue inputs (and outputs) for hooking up external sources. No Bluetooth, though.



The Encore sports a headphone socket on its front fascia

The sound quality, delivered by the stereo front-facing drivers and a down-firing (and rear-ported) bass unit is authentically punchy. Bass is a strong point, giving body to whatever source you're listening to, although higher-frequencies are a little shrill. It easily goes loud enough to suit a bedroom, kitchen or den.

There are nice touches to the Encore, including location-based weather info and clock radio functionality, and the cabinet design and build is impressive. Yet the user experience is far from slick ■

HCC VERDICT

Grace Digital Encore ➜ £220

Overall ★★★½☆

SONY MDR-1ADAC ➜ £250 approx

DAC's the idea for Sony

These 'phones combine impressive performance with clever onboard tech, says **Adrian Justins**

HERE'S AN INTERESTING idea – headphones with their own onboard USB DAC (with 24-bit/192kHz hi-res capability) and built-in S-master HX amp, allowing you to bypass the potentially inferior silicon in your digital source, but without recourse to a portable DAC.



The headphones can, of course, receive an analogue signal from your phone/portable audio player using their 3.5mm line input, and work as typical passive cans. To take advantage of the internal DAC you need to take the digital path, and have the cans charged (battery life extends to around seven/eight hours). Source devices with a range of outputs are catered for – appropriate cables for Apple's Lightning connector, micro-USB, USB and Sony's proprietary Walkman connection are bundled. These plug into a micro-USB input on the left enclosure.

Sony's twin 40mm drivers deliver a superior sound, even in passive mode. These are extremely revealing cans, serving up impressive detailing across the frequency range and effective soundstaging and scale. Bass is tight and punchy without being domineering. Switch to digital mode and hi-res audio and the DAC proves its worth. A 24-bit/96kHz download of David Bowie's *Valentine's Day* shows a notable step up in terms of texture and timing – the guitars and Bowie's vocals benefit from the extra headroom.

The cans can also be used in passive mode

The design and comfort of the MDR-1ADACs is first-rate, and you also get a neat carry pouch. They're a worthwhile audition for music lovers, particularly those with hi-res audio collections ■

HCC VERDICT

Sony MDR-1ADAC ➜ £250

Overall ★★★★½

ELAC

sound lives

On-wall



Turn the music on-wall

Wall-mounted loudspeakers



Distributed by **Hi-Fi Network Ltd.**
Tel. 01285 643088
www.hifi-network.com

www.elac.com



Digital Copy

There's only one way to watch the *Star Wars* movies and it isn't on an iPad. Yet **Mark Craven** can see the reasoning behind the new Digital HD versions of the sci-fi series

HAVE YOU GRABBED your Digital HD copy of *Star Wars: A New Hope* yet? You probably haven't, as you already own it on Blu-ray along with the other five films. But thanks to an agreement reached between Twentieth Century Fox and Disney, all six of the George Lucas-produced sci-fi flicks can now be purchased digitally, via the likes of iTunes, Google Play and Amazon Instant Video.

The pricing is high enough to make R2-D2's head swivel. For instance, the entire bundle (*Star Wars: The Digital Movie Collection*) sells for £59.99. That's £10 a movie, with lossless 5.1 mixes, less-than-BD quality imagery, and a smattering of extras. Titles on their own cost £11.99, or £9.99 if you opt for the standard-definition version. Conversely, you can pick up the brilliant nine-disc *Complete Saga* on Blu-ray for around £45.

It's easy to see the logic behind this digital re-release, though. Firstly, Disney needs to start recouping some of the $4bn it doled out for the *Star Wars* rights. Secondly, and more importantly, it needs to kickstart anticipation ahead of *Episode VII*, which arrives in cinemas just before Christmas.

A long time ago

While seasoned AV-holics like ourselves need no introduction to the escapades of Luke Skywalker and chums, many of Disney's target market weren't alive when the original trilogy was released. Heck, they weren't even alive when it was re-released in the late '90s, complete with additional CG ghosts and Hans Solo shooting second. Even the most recent *Star Wars* movie, *The Revenge of the Sith*, is now ten years old. By releasing the preceding titles as HD downloads, Disney is clearing the path for doting parents to get their young padawans – who only ever watch anything on a smartphone or tablet – up to speed on all things *Star Wars*. And why not? After all, if you're taking young Johnny out to see *The Force Awakens* on December 18, you don't want him asking who the hell Harrison Ford is meant to be every five minutes.

Yet I will confess to being a little sad about this relegation of *Star Wars* to second-screen fodder. **The original trilogy, a few dodgy puppets withstanding, is a technically astonishing piece of filmmaking**, with wonderful VFX, groundbreaking surround sound mixes and spine-tingling scores. They're films that eke everything possible out of the cinema-going experience. And, as such, they deserve the best presentation possible.

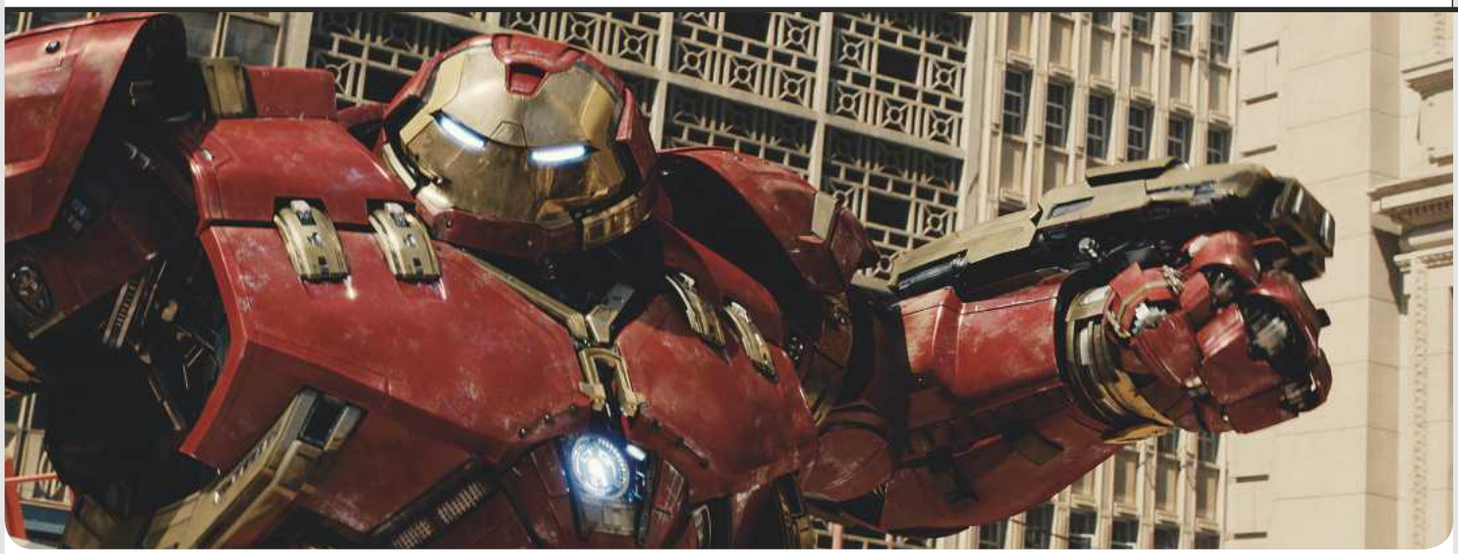
Personally, I think the best thing Disney could do would be to re-release all six films in cinemas this Summer/Autumn. The 3D ret-con of *The Phantom Menace* proved that people will still venture out to spend time in a galaxy far, far away, even if it means putting up with Jar-Jar Binks and funny spex. But it would appear that's not an option for the House of Mouse. Of course, it has its own Marvel Cinematic Universe movies to worry about, not to mention a new Bond outing and the final part of the *Hunger Games* franchise to avoid at the multiplex. And, perhaps, it's hoping not to kill the *Star Wars* buzz by reminding people just how bad some of *Attack of the Clones* actually was...

Your home cinema, therefore, becomes the next best thing. Dig out your Blu-ray boxset and introduce your junior Jedis to Lucas's epic saga on the bigscreen with the amp set high. As handy as those digital HD versions may be, they're simply not the *Star Wars* experience you're looking for ■

Would you go back to the cinema to watch Star Wars*? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com*



Mark Craven is preparing for the inevitable oncoming *Star Wars* mania by donning a brown cloak and living as a hermit in a cave in the desert



Film Fanatic

Anton van Beek tries to get his head around Hollywood's current fascination for 'shared cinematic universes' and wonders where it will end...

BLAME MARVEL STUDIOS. Once upon a time film franchises were simple things. You made a movie and, if it did good business at the box office, you went and made a sequel. Then another and another, *ad nauseam*, until you reached the tipping point for audience apathy where the cost of making the films was higher than the profits they brought in. Then Marvel Studios came along with its interlinked superhero movies and everything changed.

It's now no longer enough to merely make a financially successful film and then churn out a load of sequels. Now your blockbuster must be seeded with characters and ideas that can spin-off into other films, and then all brought together for a big blockbuster blow-out once in a while.

The fact that Warner Bros. and DC Comics decided to quickly follow in the footsteps of Marvel with its own shared cinematic superhero universe came as no surprise. But, while Marvel has given the appearance of considered long-term planning across its shared universe of films that is building towards a specific goal, **Warner/DC seems to simply be throwing everything together as quickly as possible in order to get its cinematic universe up and running as soon as possible**.

This explains why next year's *Man of Steel* follow-up *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* not only introduces audiences to yet another version of Batman, but will also see the debut of Wonder Woman, Aquaman and Cyborg (not forgetting the persistent but as-yet-unconfirmed rumours that Flash will put in an appearance).

The chances that any character outside of Batman and Superman will have a substantial role are extremely unlikely. Instead, it's much more likely that they're only there in order to plant the seeds for upcoming spin-offs, such as 2017's *Wonder Woman* and *Justice League: Part One*, 2018's *The Flash* and *Aquaman*, as well as 2020's *Cyborg*.

Expanding universes

It doesn't end at superhero movies, either. The *Star Wars* franchise has always played with the idea of an 'expanded universe' through books, comics, cartoons and even made-for-TV Ewok movies. However, under Disney's watch, *Star Wars* is turning into a true shared cinematic universe, with spin-offs planned to hit cinemas between *Episodes VII*, *VIII* and *IX*. As well as rumoured standalone films about Boba Fett and Han Solo, it was recently confirmed that Gareth Edwards' *Rogue One* will deal with the rebels who stole the plans to the original Death Star (presumably not the 'Joe Camel' look-alike Bothans that appeared in the old *Star Wars* comics).

Elsewhere, Universal Studios has been discussing plans to build a shared cinematic universe around its library of classic monsters, Sony Pictures has set up the Ghost Corps production company specifically to create a *Ghostbusters* universe, while Paramount has confirmed plans to do the same with the *Transformers* films, kicking off with the next sequel.

This is no bad thing if you're a fan of popcorn cinema, but where will it all end? Will audiences get a Hasbro board game universe that pits the survivors of the *Battleships* and *Ouija* flicks against an army of alien ghosts? Or what about a Luc Besson universe in which Frank Martin (*The Transporter*) must join forces with Bryan Mills (*Taken*) when Lucy (er *Lucy*) is kidnapped by baddies planing to use her powers to kickstart World War Three?

Actually, that last one sounds pretty good ■

What do you think about the idea of shared cinematic universes? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com



Anton van Beek is waiting for the inevitable call from Luc Besson asking him to take a stab at writing the script for the *Transporter/Lucy/Taken* crossover



Revolution in design. Revolution in sound.

Revolution XT lives up to its name, marking a major leap forward in loudspeaker design and the realisation of some of Tannoy's most radical and forward thinking technologies.

Retaining the classic trapezoid shape from its multi award-winning predecessor, the new Revolution XT cabinets now feature an ingenious reflex-coupled dual-cavity design. This optimises performance of the all-new Omnimagnet™ Dual Concentric™ driver across extremely low to mid-bass frequencies. The complex internal design is further perfected with an integrated plinth that provides a uniform and predictable low frequency interface to the listening environment, delivering the deepest bass notes with ease.

Dynamic, engaging and articulate, yet incredibly easy to set-up and place in any room, Tannoy's Revolution XT is a true revolution in sound. Find out more at tannoy.com.

TANNOY®

"The Tannoy Revolution XT6Fs are incredible speakers for the money and you must seek them out for an audition."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION ★★★★★

March 2015 What Hi-Fi website



PICTURE THIS

The ambient lighting in a viewing room can have a huge effect on your vision and your movie-watching enjoyment. **Vincent Teoh** suggests bias lighting is the answer

WOULD YOU LIKE to know a way to improve the perceived blacks on your TV without spending hundreds of pounds? Of course you would – black level performance is undoubtedly the most important element contributing to great picture quality. I liken black level to a blank sheet of canvas: the deeper the blacks, the purer the canvas that allows onscreen images to flourish.

The secret I'm about to tell you has nothing to do with your TV, but concerns the environment in which you're watching the display.

During the day, there's usually a high amount of ambient light in the average living room, which makes our pupils constrict. While this natural autonomic reaction deepens perceived blacks (which is why IPS-based LCD TVs fare well in showrooms in spite of their sub-par black level), it also makes shadow detail less visible.

The goal of calibration for daytime viewing is then two-fold: to ensure the picture is bright enough to avoid being drowned out by competing ambient light (a good analogy is how smartphones have to increase their brightness under the sun for text messages to remain readable); and to lift shadow detail by lowering gamma. Total colour accuracy is less important here, as sunlight will throw a different hue on the screen depending on the time of the day.

Most videophiles do their critical viewing at night, and rightly so. Some watch in a pitch-black room, but that's not ideal. When the only source of light is coming from your TV, any transition from a dark to bright scene (and vice versa) will cause your pupils to constrict and dilate correspondingly, which quickly leads to eye-strain or even headache. Also, because the photoreceptor cells in your retina take longer to respond to a quick cut from a bright frame to a dark one than the time it takes for your pupils to dilate, you may not pick up shadow detail until your retinal rods have acclimatised, by which time a different frame might be showing.

Get smart with lighting

The solution is to maintain a baseline level of luminance in the room so your pupils don't have to work as hard. Some viewers resort to lamps from the ceiling or behind the sofa. Neither is advisable because both positions are likely to introduce on-screen reflections. (It's a shame that the most effective anti-reflective technology I've seen – the Moth-Eye filter implemented on some Philips and Sharp TVs in 2012/2013 – can no longer be bought).

To avoid introducing unnecessary reflections on screen, the best placement for such illumination is behind the TV but not directly visible to the viewer – in the video world this practice is known as bias lighting. The Society of Motion Picture & Television Engineers (SMPTE) recommends that the colour of light should be D65 (the same white point standard used in calibration), and the brightness of the reflected illumination shouldn't exceed 10 per cent of the TV's peak luminance.

Higher-end Philips TVs feature integrated bias lighting (marketed as Ambilight), though it's best to go with a static warm white setting rather than the default content-adaptive preset. If you don't own an Ambilight TV you can purchase DIY bulbs or specialised kit, such as the Ideal-Lume series from CinemaQuest. Properly implemented, bias lighting will not only provide more comfortable viewing in a dark room, but also enhance the perceived blacks and contrast on your display. Give it a try ■

Do you have bias lighting in your cinema room? Let us know: Email letters@homecinemachoice.com



Vincent Teoh has worked as a professional video calibrator for seven years and even has the light around his bathroom mirror outputting at D65

ENTER A NEW WORLD OF SOUND.



PIONEER'S NEW AVR'S (SC-LX58 AND UP) WITH DOLBY ATMOS® TRANSPORT YOU from an ordinary moment into an extraordinary experience with captivating, multi-dimensional sound that fills your room with amazing depth and rich quality. Uniquely, Pioneer LX models feature high performance Class D digital amplification, capable of delivering astonishing speed, power, accuracy and performance as well as utilising high energy saving and efficiency capabilities.

Selected models* have also undergone Air Studios' rigorous certification process. This prestigious seal of approval ensures that whether watching movies or listening to music, the audio is reproduced precisely as the artist intended. Welcome to a new world of sound that delivers the full impact of entertainment – it will move your mind, body, and soul.

Begin the journey at www.pioneer.co.uk/receiver

FEEL EVERY DIMENSION IN DOLBY ATMOS™ air studios

Pioneer.electronics
@PioneerUK

Pioneer

Dolby, Dolby Atmos, and the double-D symbol are registered trademarks of Dolby Laboratories.
All other trademarks remain the property of their respective owners. © 2014 Dolby Laboratories, Inc. All rights reserved.

*Air Studios models are SC-LX78 and SC-LX88 only

Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Need to comment on current technology? Want to share your knowledge with our readers? **HCC** is here to help

AVR = great switcher!

Hi. I seem to be always taken aback by the speed at which new tech blasts onto our shelves – UHD, Dolby Atmos, OLED etc – but it's the older tech that's left behind that can really benefit your cinema.

My 4x2 video switch went belly up lately, so I started pricing new ones. A very good one can cost a fair bit so I was trawling through the *HCC* website and found a review of the Pioneer VSX-924 receiver. Now what has this to do with a video switch?

At £500 when it launched last Spring this was rated a great buy, but at the current £279 it's a steal. And with a built in 7x2 HDMI switch it's bloody amazing, and the two outputs can be controlled by a free app even in standby mode.



Need a new HDMI switcher? Maybe an AVR is a better bet...

So again I learned something new thanks to my tech bible *HCC*.

Here's to new tech for making the 'old' tech obsolete – not!

Peter Brennan, via email

Mark Craven replies: The way that AV receivers (and TVs and Blu-ray players, too) drop in price when a new year's range is launched (or imminent) always is that great-looking 3D movies continue to arrive – in our last issue, for instance, I was left gobsmacked by *The Book of Life 3D*.

In fairness to the TV companies, I think they pushed the format pretty hard, actually! We all remember plenty of advertising and marketing hype around 3D TVs.

★ Star letter... Why wasn't 3D given a greater push?

Having read your magazine right from issue one I've always enjoyed the endless debates regarding different formats and new innovations. In particular I've enjoyed the recent letters about 3D. In my opinion I think 3D is the most underrated format for years. For the life of me I truly can't understand why manufacturers have never pushed the format and promoted it as much as they could have. I went to see James Cameron's *Avatar* in 3D at the IMAX theatre in Bradford. It was the most staggering movie experience I've ever had. I was absolutely blown away by the realism. I actually felt like I could have reached out and put my hand on Sigourney Weaver's shoulder, that I could reach out and touch the exotic flowers. I was stunned. I couldn't wait to experience 3D in my own living room on my own system.

Which brings me onto my real gripe. 3D glasses! Manufacturers seem to be more worried about how the glasses look and not what the glasses should be doing. First of all let's get one thing absolutely clear – 3D is definitely for the bigger screens, anything less than 50in will not do the format justice. Anyway... glasses. Why the hell are the lenses so damn small? What's the point of trying to watch 3D on the biggest screen possible when all you can see is the frames of the glasses, and your surroundings in your peripheral vision? If the lenses were big enough the frames wouldn't be readily visible. Sod the street cred. You're sat in the dark, who gives a damn what they look like? Make the lenses bigger and take the frames out of your immediate vision. Let us see our screens! It's not rocket science!

Last but not least, my trusty old Onkyo amp has died (the HDMI ports have packed up). I'm looking to replace it with a 4K-compatible, Dolby Atmos, 3D receiver. My speakers are the Audio Pro Blue Diamonds which operate at 4 ohms. I would really appreciate it if you could recommend a replacement engine for a maximum budget of £1,000. Cheers folks, keep up the good work!

Terry Wells, via email

Anton van Beek replies: It almost seems a lifetime ago that *Avatar* was re-introducing film-fans to the idea of 3D! Anyway, I share your view that the format is underrated, but what's important





The Abyss: Blu-ray's most wanted title?

impresses me. I understand that TVs change quite a bit year on year, but at the budget end of the AVR market much remains the same. Pioneer's nifty VSX-924 at £280 is therefore a bargain. And I'm glad it's managed to solve your HDMI switching problem.

Rats flee The Abyss

With reference to films that had scenes not meant to be shown (*Film Fanatic*, *HCC* #246), one comes to my mind. Quite a few years ago Channel 4 transmitted *The Abyss*. There was a scene showing a rat in a laboratory, surviving under water (using a new technology) with no breathing gear in a glass or plastic dish. This was not in the UK theatrical version or the DVD and Channel 4 admitted (if my memory serves me correctly) that this was indeed a mistake.

When this title eventually makes it to Blu-ray (if it ever does) I'm wondering if this scene will be re-instated. I believe the reason it was cut was due to the fact that there was a concern that children, or grown-up idiots, might try it out on their rodent pets.

And just as a matter of interest Channel 4 and BBC 2 were the first analogue terrestrial stations to show films in widescreen (black bars at the top and bottom to the uninitiated) when 99.9 per cent of us had 4:3 TVs. *The Abyss* was shown in this format.

Mr M Biggins, via email

Anton van Beek replies: I too remember that TV screening of *The Abyss* and the subsequent fuss that kicked up around it in genre magazines at the time. As I understand it, the sequence of the rodent being submerged in the liquid-oxygen breathing solution was cut by the BBFC not to prevent imitation, but because the animal appeared to be distressed by the experience (despite James Cameron's insistence that it was unharmed by the scene). As such, it presumably contravened The Cinematograph (Animals) Act of 1937, a law passed to prohibit the 'exhibition of a film if animals have been cruelly mistreated for the purposes of making the film by 1) the cruel infliction of pain or terror 2) the cruel goading of any animal to fury'. It's the same law that has caused a large number of films (mainly Westerns) to be cut in the UK to eliminate deliberate 'horse trips'.

Getting back to the matter at hand, if the internet is to be trusted, it appears that the rat scene actually appeared in its entirety on the original UK VHS release – none of Team HCC still has a copy of the videotape >

But it seems the Active vs Passive issue, and the lack of 3D content, turned consumers cold.

Avatar, in fact, may be relevant here. This was the biggest 3D movie of all time and, yes, stunning in cinemas, but when it arrived on Blu-ray and DVD in Spring 2010 buyers could only get it in 2D flavour. It was another two and half years before it was available on 3D Blu-ray in shops because Panasonic, in the meantime, had a deal to bundle the disc with its hardware. This may have made Fox and Panasonic some money, but it didn't help the health of the format.

Mark Craven replies: Your amp question: a good buy at your budget would be Onkyo's TX-NR838 (which retails for around £800). This is a seven-channel model with Dolby Atmos support (so you can run 5.1.2 Atmos) and 4K and 3D pass-through aided by HDCP 2.2 support, which brings you a welcome level of futureproofing. It's a rock-solid, precise performer, and packed with bonus features including Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

Remember that this Onkyo won't support DTS:X when it arrives later this year. In fact, no current AVR at £1,000 or under will. This may be reason enough for you to delay your purchase until new hardware arrives – as long as you can live without surround sound until then.

Star letter-writer Terry wins a copy of *The Long Good Friday + Mona Lisa* Blu-ray boxset, courtesy of Arrow Video. Available to buy now, this limited edition set features new restorations of the two crime classics and is loaded with exclusive bonus features.

Contact us...

Write to HCC, AV Tech Media Ltd, Enterprise House, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF, or email us at letters@homecinemachoice.com

Please note: we cannot guarantee to print/answer all the letters we receive. Sorry.

(or a VHS deck to play it on, probably) to check this for ourselves. It then disappeared again from the Special Edition VHS and remained missing on the two-disc UK DVD release. Rather than simply cut the entire sequence, the BBFC-approved re-edit uses a combination of cuts and substitutions, with shots of the onlookers' faces used in a couple of places to cover the offending footage.

Given that The Cinematograph (Animals) Act of 1937 is still on the books, it'll be very interesting to see what happens if and when a Blu-ray release comes along, but I'll be surprised if the sequence makes it through the BBFC uncut.

I want these sci-fis on Blu-ray!

Continuing the films we want on Blu-ray discussion... *Final Approach* (1991) is a sci-fi mind bender of a story with fine performances by James Sikking and Hector Elizondo. It featured the world's first all-digital soundtrack, then using the CDS 5.1 format. The Laserdisc is the still the finest way of watching it in 2.35:1 with PCM Dolby Stereo.

And, of course, The Abyss (1989). I prefer the theatrical edition – am not really into special editions like I was in the '90s. But I doubt *The Abyss* will be released this year, as word has been around that it would be the year before and so on. If it's released it had better be a good all new-transfer, as the colouring on past editions is a bit off with some of the whites and blues.
Andy Summers, via Facebook

Mark Craven replies: I think it's safe to say that *The Abyss* is the most sought-after title for a debut Blu-ray release. At this rate, it will probably go straight for a 4K disc outing!

What struck me this month as we beavered away on our B movies feature (see page 24) was the sheer number of movies that still aren't available on Blu-ray. While titles like *The Abyss* will always grab the headlines, there are countless others, particularly from the 1930s, '40s and '50s, that appear destined to wither on DVD. I just hope that all these flicks are archived properly.

Where to buy JBL speakers?

I've just read the great review of JBL's Studio 2 series speakers (5.1 package) on the *HCC* website [*originally published in* HCC *#234 – Ed*]. As I'm looking for a good set of speakers to partner my Denon AVR-4520 I was very excited to see that review. I like the design and I like the price!

But the problem is, where I can buy them? I've checked dealers who sell JBL products. I looked on eBay, Googled... What's the point to review them when you can't get them? Please help me out!
Romualds Pizans, via email

Ed Selley replies: JBL's speakers can be purchased direct from JBL via its website – http://uk.jbl.com. All the models in the Studio 2 series, including the subwoofer and the centre channel, can be found in the Home Audio section, confusingly under the Stereo Speakers heading. Hope that helps!

Separates or an all-in-one?

I am on the verge of upgrading my home cinema setup in my dedicated and recently acoustically-treated audio/home theatre basement (4.3m x 3.5m). With pleasure I have read reviews on your website about various home cinema systems. At the moment I have teamed up my Sony KDL-46W905 with a Sony BDV-E780. This all-in-one system has been bugging me ever since I got it due to its muffled sound. The centre speaker seems to get drowned out, if you know what I mean.

After much research I have narrowed my prime candidates down to a couple of systems, the Sony BDV-N7200W (in your opinion would this probably be as good as the Sony BDV-N7100W you

Win! Three great Blu-rays up for grabs

Just email your answer to Competitions@homecinemachoice.com to be in with a chance



WIN

Orange is the New Black: Season Two

The second season of the critically-acclaimed and extremely funny series about the female inmates of Litchfield Penitentiary arrives on Blu-ray, DVD and Digital HD on May 18. Thanks to Lionsgate Home Entertainment, we've got three copies of the Blu-ray up for grabs.

Question:
Orange is the New Black is shown on which internet TV streaming service?
Answer:
A) *Netflix* **B)** *4OD* **C)** *Amazon Prime*
Email your answer with ***'Orange is the New Black 2'*** *as the subject heading – and include your postal address!*



WIN

Ex_Machina

Prepare to witness a chilling glimpse into the future of artificial intelligence when the intense sci-fi thriller ***Ex_Machina*** is released on Digital Download from May 18, followed by Blu-ray™ and DVD from June 1. Thanks to Universal Pictures (UK), we have five copies of the ***Ex_Machina*** Blu-ray to give away.

Question:
Ex_Machina writer/director Alex Garland also wrote which comic book film?
Answer:
A) *Batman Begins* **B)** *Iron Man* **C)** *Dredd*
Email your answer with ***'Ex_Machina'*** *as the subject heading – and include your postal address!*



WIN

Big Hero 6

To celebrate the release of Disney's ***Big Hero 6***, out on Disney 3D Blu-ray™, Blu-ray™, DVD and Digital HD on 25th May 2015, *Home Cinema Choice* is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of ***Big Hero 6*** on Blu-ray™. Just answer the following question correctly to be in with a chance...

Question:
What is the name of Hiro Hamada's robotic companion in ***Big Hero 6***?
Answer:
A) *Baymax* **B)** *Betamax* **C)** *R2-D2*
Email your answer with ***'Big Hero 6'*** *as the subject heading – and include your postal address!*

Terms & Conditions
1. Entrants must be aged 18 or over and resident in the United Kingdom. 2. Employees of MyTimeMedia Ltd and companies supplying competition prizes are not eligible to enter. 3. No responsibility will be accepted for delayed, mislaid, lost or damaged entries. 4. Only one entry per household; multiple entries will be discounted. 5. Prizes will be awarded to the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing date. 6. No alternatives, cash or otherwise, will be offered to the winner as prizes. 7. The editor's decision is final. 8. The closing date is June 11, 2015.

ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK © 2014 LIONS GATE TELEVISION INC. ARTWORK & SUPPLEMENTARYMATERIALS ™ & © 2015 LIONSGATE HOME ENTERTAINMENT UK.
EX_MACHINA © 2015 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
BIG HERO 6 © 2015 DISNEY.

Audio Express

Hot Deals on top brands, plus FREE *overnight** delivery!

Prices include VAT • Brand new equipment (NOT graded) • 2 year guarantees • Authorised dealer for 25 years

HOME CINEMA



Canton DM 50
Black Soundbase
~~£399~~ £279



Canton DM 50
White Soundbase
~~£399~~ £249



Canton DM 75 Silver
Soundbase (Mint, Ex-Dem)
~~£449~~ £279



Focal Dome (5.1)
Home Cinema Speakers
~~£1500~~ £675



Yamaha RX-V677
Network 7.2 Receiver
~~£559~~ £379

DOLBY ATMOS



Onkyo TX-NR636
Network 7.2 Receiver
~~£499~~ £379



Yamaha RX-A2040
(Mint, Ex-Dem)
~~£1499~~ £949



Yamaha RX-A3040
(Mint, Ex-Dem)
~~£1999~~ £1399

Over 250 www.audio-express.co.uk Hot Deals!

PURE STEREO



DALI MENTOR MENUET
Speakers (Mint, Ex-Dem)
~~£849~~ £599



Tannoy DC6T SE
Speakers
~~£999~~ £499



Tannoy Precision 6.2
Speakers Satin Walnut
~~£1699~~ £799



Tannoy Precision 6.4
Speakers Satin Walnut
(Brand new - slight cosmetic seconds)
~~£2199~~ £999



Cyrus Pre DAC
Pre-amp / DAC
~~£1250~~ £599



Cyrus 8 Qx DAC
Amp / Audiophile DAC
~~£1750~~ £1349



Roksan Kandy K2BT Amp
+ Roksan Kandy K2 CD
~~£1820~~ £1195



Cyrus Lyric 05 (Mint, Ex-Dem)
CD / DAC / Network amp
~~£2250~~ £1799

99% ★★★★★ TRUSTPILOT RATING

Over 1000 five star customer reviews

"Shop with confidence!"

MasterCard Maestro JCB VISA PayPal Pay with amazon

98% ★★★★★ amazon RATING

01743 236055

* Overnight delivery - terms and conditions apply; please see website for details.

01743 241924

Arcam • Audiolab • Canton • Cyrus • DALI • Denon • Focal • Marantz • Naim • Neat • Onkyo • Q Acoustics • Roksan • Tannoy • Wharfedale • Yamaha

EXPERIENCE THE EXTRAORDINARY AT HOME.

DOLBY ATMOS



PR-SC5530
11.2-Channel Network A/V Controller



TX-NR3030
11.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver



TX-NR1030
9.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver



TX-NR838
7.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver



TX-NR737
7.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver



TX-NR636
7.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver



HT-S9700THX
7.1-Channel Network A/V Receiver/Speaker Package



HT-S7705
5.1.2-Channel Network A/V Receiver/Speaker Package



SKH-410
Dolby Atmos-Enabled Speaker System

HOME CINEMA Choice BEST BUY

"On the strength of the Onkyo TX-NR838, I predict the days of buying a non-Dolby Atmos-enabled AV receiver are drawing rapidly to a close. The future of home theatre begins here."
Steve May, Home Cinema Choice, December 2014

ONKYO®
www.uk.onkyo.com



JBL's Studio series: affordable floorstanders

reviewed?) or the Q Acoustics 2000i package with a Sony STR-DN850 AV receiver.

Since both systems got favourable reviews on your website I would appreciate your advice. How do these sets measure up against each other? Which of these two systems in your opinion is the better choice sound-wise? And if the Q Acoustics is better, is it that much better than the Sony system that it justifies the price difference?

I am mainly looking to use the system for movies and television so that might help you answer my question a bit more easily. Next to that I plan on adding a second row of seats behind the listening position and I want to add a Sony HW40ES projector and projector screen as well. Basically, I want to really transform my man-cave into a small five-seat home theatre.

Any insight from you guys would be truly appreciated.
Menno Meijer, via email

Mark Craven replies: Hi Menno. In my view, the answer to your question is: get the Q Acoustics/ Sony amp combi. For a couple of reasons.

Firstly, it will offer a better sonic performance than the Sony all-in-one system, particularly in terms of scale, bass output and dynamics. For the kind of home cinema you are aiming for – with a projector and screen – you really want an audio performance to match those large visuals. That's not to demean all-in-one systems, but these are very much designed with convenience in mind (disc playback, media streaming and surround sound in one package). The Sony is a premium model where such packages are concerned, but I'd still plump for the separates option.

Secondly, opting for a separate speaker and amplifier also gives you much greater flexibility regarding the future of your cinema room. The Sony STR-DN850 packs greater connectivity than the main unit of the BDV-N7200W, and – should you want to – you can replace that amp with another model down the line while still retaining the Q Acoustics speakers.

I would suggest the difference in pricing between your two proposed setups (probably around £300) is worth paying.

How much?!

Just read the review of the Samsung 65in HDR TV (*HCC* #246). I understand this screen is large and offers a very good picture, but I can't believe the price tag is £6,000! For that money I would definitely choose a projector and larger screen over a television.

4K and HDR technologies are obviously the cutting-edge at the moment, but I doubt many will be investing in them at that price!
Dominic, via email

Mark Craven replies: The Samsung certainly is expensive (and the 78in and 88in versions cost even more!) but new, premium technology always is – not least because the manufacturer needs to earn back its research and development costs.

Yes, many people like yourself will baulk at the price when compared to a projector and screen, but it's not always a case of either-or. Projectors, no matter how much we love them, are niche products compared to flat/ curved TVs. Also, there's still a paucity of native 4K projectors on the market, let alone HDR models. So while a projected image will be larger, it won't necessarily be better ■



Sony's BDV-N7200W packs plenty of features for the AV novice

Lofty ambitions!



HCC reader **Mr X** returns to reveal how he's upgraded his cinema room's control system – which means his better half is now finally able to fire up a movie...



Our AV-holic's room is carved out of his loft space

THIS FANTASTIC ATTIC cinema first featured in *HCC* back in the Summer of 2012. The pride and joy of an owner we dubbed 'Mr X' (as he wants to remain anonymous), it marries gorgeous aesthetics with some potent hardware to deliver a cinema room we'd all love to own.

However, as most of us appreciate, a home theatre is never static. Things can always be changed, tweaked and upgraded. Here, some key components have been replaced for an improved performance, including the installation of a Control4 system for a smooth-running experience. Here, our AV-holic reveals the reasons behind these upgrades.

What led you to want a new control system for your cinema room?

I previously had a DemoPad control setup. This was okay but I had a few issues with things not always working. It was also confined to the iPad. So if we wanted to pause a film, the process of swipe, enter password, enter DemoPad, then hit pause was too much of a faff. When we saw Control4, the idea of going back to a dedicated remote seemed kind of appealing. It's got its own little holder and you pick it up, hit '4' and that's it. The menu appears on screen, blinds go down, lights dim and we're ready to go.

What kit have you got in the setup ?

We still have the Onkyo TX-NR1009 AV receiver, the speakers are the original KEF in-wall/in-ceiling CI series, and the subwoofer is still the bad-boy Bowers & Wilkins DB1. However, we recently upgraded the Freeview box to the Humax DTR-T2000 with YouView, and we also upgraded the projector to a Sony VPL-HW55ES. Previously it was a Panasonic PT-AT5000E. The bulb on that was dimming after so much use and while I could have just changed the bulb, I thought 'let's see what else is on the market.' Then Jules from Display Calibration (who calibrated my setup previously) rang me. He knew I was always looking to upgrade my system, and told me of an amazing deal on the Sony projector. When he told me how much I was saving I said 'I'm in!'. A rather expensive impulse buy but he also >





A new Sony PJ has been fitted, and the kit cupboard (back left in this pic) now moved to a new home in the eaves

threw in the THX calibration. So it seemed pretty good. The 3D is a lot brighter, which is particularly awesome. We had a couple of issues with it going off, which we were told was due to overheating, so we ventilated the box it sits in and it seems to be playing okay for now. All together it's an incredible experience.

Why did you opt for Control4 rather than one of the rival systems like Crestron, AMX, etc?

Actually, I didn't look at Crestron or AMX. I think I'm a little impulsive! I saw Control4, liked what it did, really liked Pete from Lumiere (Leeds-based AV installer) and decided to try it. I liked the one button to start everything up. I was so impressed that after he did the loft cinema I got him to put one in the lounge to control the TV and setup downstairs.

What hardware did Lumiere install? And how much new cabling was needed?

My system uses the Control4 HC800 controller and the SR-250 remote. A general tidy up of all the original cables took place, and a 24-port Gigabit Ethernet switch was added. Pete is, like me, a little OCD for neatness. He is the cable-tie king.

One of the best things was moving the Onkyo amp, my Sonos gear, the Apple TV and Control4 box into the eaves of my attic. It's a lot cooler in there so should help the equipment. Pete installed a rack, too, which everything sits in. It looks fantastic. And we decided to upgrade lots of the cables to CAT6 to futureproof a little more.

What's it like using the new setup? Is everything working smoothly?

The thing is, with any new setup, you don't know how things work fully until you start to use it. I made a list for Pete, things like if we press pause, the lights dim; when you switch it off the lights go brighter; customising some of the hard buttons, too. I emailed the list to Pete and within 30 minutes he wrote back and said 'try now'. He's able to tweak the setup without having to come over. Now that was impressive.

Does it make it easier for other family members to enjoy the cinema setup?

For the first time since 2011 when we started this project, my other half can work it. It all scared her a bit before. Now she loves it. It really is pretty simple. You get stuck, just press the Red '4' button.

How much did the Control4 overhaul cost?

Well, I had a quote from another installer and then Lumiere who were slightly cheaper. It was a couple of grand, but that was the top-end Control4 system for the loft, the rack unit, re-wiring, the remote, extra sockets, the new switcher, plus a couple of days work and programming. To be honest, I buy into people. Pete was so full of enthusiasm and nothing was an issue, so it didn't really matter. I was confident the job was going to be done right and I knew if there were any issues, he would want to sort them.

What are your current favourite Blu-rays to run through the system?

I have to admit it's stuff that's noisy. I do like the Burj Khalifa sequence in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* with Tom Cruise in the sandstorm. That looks great. And although *Pacific Rim* is a terrible film, the visuals and sound are incredible here. I really love the look of *Blood Diamond* on this screen. My all-time favourite is actually *Casino*. The soundtrack is great.

Are you considering upgrading to 4K and/or Dolby Atmos/DTS:X?

4K? I still can't see the point as there is very









The new kit rack, with Onkyo amp, Control4 controller and network switch

little content available at the moment. Personally I believe when content becomes more dominant in the market place then the equipment will also fall in price. So unless I want to watch two hours of the Grand Canyon or two hours of flowers growing in a field then 4K is not really for me. I do wonder if it will ruin some films, too. Blu-ray is impressive and with 4K I don't want to see in detail a zit on Cameron Diaz's chin. Maybe I need to see something in 4K first to see if I'm sold on it. Now, Dolby Atmos? Yes I am interested. I'm considering having the room acoustically treated on the walls to look more in line with these posh installs you see in multimillionaires' mansions, (that's not me), so it may be possible to retro-fit extra speakers without destroying the house too much! ■

Share your system in the mag!

IF YOU WANT TO BE THE NEXT 'AV-HOLIC' IN HCC, you'll need to send us some hi-res images of your cinema room. The better-quality image we get, the better your room will look. So follow these simple steps:

1. Go big. Set your camera to take images at the largest possible size, and at the highest resolution. Don't worry about cropping or resizing – we will make them print-ready.

2. Get in focus. Make sure your photos are as sharp and clear as possible. If you have one, use a tripod, or place your camera on a flat, steady surface and take pictures on a delay. The sharper they are, the bigger we can print them.

3. Let some light in. While we tend to watch movies in the dark, our cinema systems look their best when they are lit. If you can shoot with natural daylight, do so. If your room doesn't get a lot of light (a garage conversion, for instance) then switch on whatever lights are fitted. Avoid using flash wherever possible.

4. Be thorough. Send photos of as much of the room as possible. Images of both the front and back of the room, the kit rack, speakers, seating, disc shelf, movie poster art... The more the merrier.

5. Don't be shy. We'd love a picture of yourself – unless you want to remain anonymous...

6. Show us more. Got pictures of your room before it was a cinema? Or snaps of work being done? We love to see these, too.

Email your selection of images to **letters@homecinemachoice.com** with the subject heading 'AV-Holic'. Provide us with some information about your setup and we'll then be back in touch.



...And blag an AudioQuest Pearl HDMI cable!

The kind people at cable king AudioQuest are giving away a two-metre Pearl HDMI cable to our AV-holic each month. The Pearl, which retails for £34, uses long-grain copper conductors and a foamed polyethylene insulation for a robust construction. All AudioQuest HDMI cables up to 10 metres meet or exceed the 10.2Gbps maximum data rate for HDMI and are approved High Speed with Ethernet cables.



IRIS technical

The Audio Visual Recruitment Specialists are seeking talented individuals

IRIS Technical, the leading Recruitment and staffing agency to the Custom integration sector.

IRIS Specialises in the representation and resourcing of high calibre, industry experienced, certified personnel within the Residential & Marine AV Integration markets, recruiting across Engineering, Design and Sales. IRIS really is the agency of choice for discerning Candidates & Employers, and were currently looking for talented Individuals!
If you work in the Custom Install sector and are looking for professional representation or are simply interested to know what the market has to offer at the moment get in touch now quoting reference: Homecinema1

Tel: 01959 928020 | Email: enquiries@iristechnical.com
www.iristechnical.com

CEDIA CUSTOM ELECTRONIC DESIGN & INSTALLATION ASSOCIATION

Bringing the ***cinema*** experience to your ***home***...

studio AV



Whether you're looking to install a dedicated home cinema system complete with seating, or simply want a great surround sound system for your living room, come to **studioAV.**

Our friendly team are able to advise you on a wide range of products so you can find exactly what you need.

44 High Street, Eton Berkshire SL4 6BL Tel: 01753 863300
www.studioav.co.uk sales@studioav.co.uk
@studioAVltd eton.studioAV

Redefining the standard.

sync-box™

Sync-box is the only recessed power and AV socket solution for use with the installation of all AV and flatscreen entertainment products.

www.sync-box.com
01892 838860



PLAYBACK

→Software highlights **INTERSTELLAR** Sci-fi epic serves up out-of-this world HD visuals **INTO THE WOODS** A fairy tale to make your home cinema sing **THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES** Fantasy finale is Hobbit-forming **THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY** Ignoring this restored British classic would be criminal **UNBROKEN** True story takes to the skies on Blu-ray **AND MUCH MORE!**



Hero with a heart

Big Hero 6 → Walt Disney → All-region BD

Disney digs deep into Marvel's back-catalogue with an animated tale of a boy and his robot. Find out how this superhero flick measures up to its live-action brethren as we give the Blu-ray a spin on p99...

HCC Ratings Key...

Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★☆
Acceptable	★★★☆☆
Disappointing	★★☆☆☆
Dire	★☆☆☆☆



'I'm telling you, the fish that got away was *this* big!'



Chris Nolan's epic space oddity

This ambitious sci-fi trips itself up at the end, but still delivers astronomically good AV on Blu-ray

➔ Interstellar

In Christopher Nolan's latest smash, a secret NASA expedition heads to another galaxy in an effort to find a new home for humanity after a devastating crop blight threatens to leave the Earth uninhabitable within a few generations. Following signals sent by earlier probes, the astronauts have a trio of potentially suitable planets to investigate, but the fact that they orbit a supermassive black hole means that time will pass differently for the crew than it does for those they left behind on Earth...

You certainly can't fault anybody involved for a lack of ambition when it comes to *Interstellar*. Working from an idea generated by theoretical physicist Kip Thorne (who stayed on as scientific advisor on the film), Nolan and his brother/co-writer Jonathan have cooked up a remarkable vision of interstellar travel that goes out of its way to get as much of the science right as is possible while also telling a thrilling story. It's designed to remind audiences of the wonders of the universe, while confronting them with profound philosophical issues.

Sadly, it comes unstuck by abandoning the science that has driven the story in favour of a fantastical finale that is the equivalent of waving a magic wand to sort everything out. It's a shame, as up until that point Nolan's film achieves a skilful balance of grand spectacle and genuinely affecting human emotion. Even so, *Interstellar* is proof that Hollywood can still make an engrossing sci-fi that stimulates the brain as well as dazzles with spectacle.





HCC Verdict

Interstellar
➔ Warner Bros. ➔ All-region BD
➔ £25/£28 Approx

WE SAY: Chris Nolan's fascinating but flawed sci-fi epic serves up a truly spectacular AV experience on BD

Movie ★★★½☆
Picture ★★★★½
Audio ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★½
Overall ★★★★☆

Picture: As with his previous few films, Nolan opted to shoot *Interstellar* using a mix of anamorphic 35mm and IMAX cameras. As such, the Blu-ray features an aspect ratio that shifts between 2.40:1 and 1.78:1 depending on the source of the footage.

The sheer amount of IMAX material used means that the transitions don't feel quite as arbitrary as they did in the likes of *The Dark Knight Rises*. The downside to the increased frequency of breathtakingly crisp and clear 70mm IMAX footage is that it makes the traditional 35mm material look softer than ever and highlights any flaws in the footage – most noticeably some washed-out blacks towards the start of the film.

Audio: The film may only feature a DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix on Blu-ray, but it's an extremely effective track. Sequences such as the escape from the giant wave (Chapter 10) demonstrate brilliantly balanced and wholly expansive surround effects, while a close encounter with a black hole (Chapter 17) delivers the sort of controlled yet impactful low-end effects that will put a smile on the face of any bass-head.

And, regardless of reports from cinemagoers, we had no problem making out the dialogue in the mix.

Extras: A second Blu-ray platter houses the 50-minute *The Science of Interstellar* documentary, plus a collection of 14 *Inside Interstellar* behind-the-scenes featurettes focusing on specific aspects of the production and four theatrical trailers.

A limited-edition Digibook Blu-ray can also be picked up, which contains extracts from the tie-in book *Interstellar: Beyond Time and Space*.

Penguins of Madagascar 3D

Twentieth Century Fox/DreamWorks
All-region BD → £28 Approx



This undemanding cinematic spin-off follows the eponymous quartet of birds as they come up against a nutty octopus who plans to mutate the world's penguins, turning everyone against them. Aimed purely at children, this feature-length 'toon offers little for grown-ups outside of its AV quality. The 1.78:1-framed 3D version offered by this 'Deluxe Edition' makes immersive use of the image's volumetric depth, with no real drop off in clarity or vibrancy from the accompanying 1.85:1-framed 2D platter. Both versions offer frantic DTS-HD MA 7.1 audio.

★★½☆☆

The Theory of Everything

Universal Pictures → All-region BD
£25 Approx



It may take its title from a scientific concept, but this award-winning Stephen Hawking biopic is far more concerned with exploring the mechanics of relationships than equations. While the tale it tells is simple, the film thrives on the performances by Eddie Redmayne and Felicity Jones, who fully deserve the acclaim heaped on them. The Blu-ray's sharp AVC 2.40:1 encode is accompanied by a DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix that satisfies without offering too much in the way of audio fireworks (outside of some actual fireworks in Chapter 4).

★★★★☆

Horrible Bosses 2

Warner Bros. → All-region BD
£25 Approx



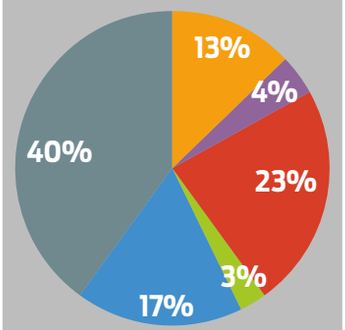
Nick (Jason Bateman), Kurt (Jason Sudeikis) and Dale (Charlie Day) have to break the law again to save their own business in a sequel that clearly believes that 'bigger' automatically equals 'better'. It doesn't, of course, but the charismatic leads and admirable commitment to crass humour ensure that it does at least generate enough laughs to make it a fun way to pass a couple of hours. While the Blu-ray's 2.40:1 imagery skews towards an unnatural teal tone, the snappy DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is surprisingly enveloping and there's also a reasonable supply of extras – including two cuts of the film itself.

★★★☆☆

WE ASKED...

Which Marvel Phase 3 movie are you most looking forward to?

Captain America 3 ■ Dr. Strange
Guardians... 2 ■ Spider-Man
Thor 3 ■ Avengers: Infinity War



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action



Happily ever after? Don't bet on it

Discover what happens after the fairy tales end in Disney's dark-tinged musical...

→ INTO THE WOODS

Fairy tales have been the stock-in-trade at Disney since the studio's earliest days. So it's somewhat bizarre that it financed and distributed this bigscreen adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's dark and subversive Broadway musical, where a bunch of familiar fairy tale characters learn that happy-endings aren't all they're cracked up to be.

While Disney has softened a few of the original production's edgier elements, director Rob '*Chicago*' Marshall does a decent job of bringing *Into the Woods* to the bigscreen more or less intact. Indeed, our biggest issue is that trying to squeeze a two-act play into a traditional three-act film leaves it feeling rather unbalanced, with the finale stretched almost to breaking point.

Yet thanks to the brilliance of the original material, the excellent cast Marshall has brought together (including wonderfully game scenery-chewing performances from Meryl Streep and Chris Pine as the Witch and Prince Charming), and the creative staging of the musical numbers, *Into the Woods* rarely strays from the path of success. Definitely one for your collection if you like to sing-along in your home cinema.

Picture: Apart from some black crush in darker scenes, we've no real complaints about this Blu-ray's 2.40:1 Full HD encode. Colours, in particular, are lush, while the clarity and sharpness of the image ensures that fine details are crisply resolved for the most part. There's also no trace of artefacting, edge-enhancement or any other technical tantrums within the AVC encode itself.



If you go down to the woods today...

Audio: The disc's sonic abilities are even more impressive, giving real presence to the beautifully orchestrated musical numbers, while running the gamut with vocals from whispered dialogue to powerful singing without any problems. And the 7.1 mix doesn't skimp on surround effects, creating convincing 360-degree soundscapes for all of the locations – most notably the woods themselves.

Extras: Provided you can navigate the baffling pictorial menu design, Disney's Blu-ray delivers a solid selection of supplementary goodies. There's a deleted musical number; six behind-the-scenes featurettes (*There's Something About the Woods*, an untitled piece about the cast, *Into the Woods: From Stage to Screen*, *Into the Woods: The Making of the Woods*, *Into the Woods: Designing the Woods* and *Into the Woods: The Costumes of the Woods*); and an informative chat track featuring Rob Marshall and producer John DeLuca.





HCC VERDICT

Into the Woods
→ Walt Disney → All-region BD
→ £25 Approx

WE SAY: An all-singing, all-dancing Blu-ray outing for this darkly amusing bigscreen musical

Movie ★★★★☆
Picture ★★★★½
Audio ★★★★★
Extras ★★★½☆
Overall ★★★★☆



Your eyes aren't deceiving you – that really is Billy Connolly riding a pig!



One last hurrah? Not quite

Overwrought, over-hyped and overlong, but at least Peter Jackson's bloated saga is finally over







Big hair is obviously popular among all of the races of Middle-earth

The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies 3D

If we didn't know better, we'd swear that Peter Jackson was deliberately aping the *Star Wars* saga with his mammoth blockbuster franchise. As with George Lucas's space opera, Jackson's fantasy series kicked off with a well-received trilogy that helped revolutionise the film industry, before returning after a lengthy gap with a trio of unsatisfying prequels that seem more concerned with the technology used to create them than the story they tell.

Picking up where *...The Desolation of Smaug* left off, this final part of *The Hobbit* wastes no time in killing off the dragon (voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch) so that it can get down to the real business of pitting armies of computer-generated *Dungeons & Dragons* figurines against one another in increasingly spectacular battles. Meanwhile Thorin Oakenshield (Richard Armitage) and his band of interchangeable dwarves wall themselves up inside the Misty Mountain and argue about whether or not to share their reclaimed loot with anyone.

But what about Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman), you ask? Well, as with the previous film in the series, Bilbo is shuffled off onto the sidelines and contributes next to nothing of any real consequence to the story, which is pretty rough treatment for a character who this particular three-part story has been named after.

As such, in his misguided attempt to pad J. R. R. Tolkien's original children's book out to fill three (!) movies and transform it into a blockbuster epic on a par with *The Lord of the Rings*, Jackson has lost sight of the heart and soul of the story. In its place you get an endless parade of tiresome and repetitive battles, which may have been a little more bearable if they weren't so heavily indebted to CGI. Just compare any of the battles from this flick to the final woodland fight with the Uruk-hai from *...The Fellowship of the Ring* and you'll see the huge difference made by shooting on location with real actors.

Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy must be viewed as a damp squib and *...The Battle of the Five Armies* is its wettest instalment. Hopefully one day the director will be persuaded back in to the editing suite to recut this bloated trilogy into the lean two-parter Tolkien's book deserved.



Evangeline Lilly returns as Mirkwood Elf guard Tauriel (right)

Picture: This Blu-ray set includes separate 2D AVC and 3D MVC encodes, both of which provide top-tier home cinema experiences. The stereoscopic 2.40:1 1080p image ranks up there with the very best live-action 3D experiences, delivering an authentic sense of depth. The separation of characters and objects from the

Demo Screen... **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies 3D** **Time code: 005.57 – 011.30**



Sound the alarm: As Laketown burns under Smaug's attack, Bard the Bowman climbs a bell tower to take aim at the beast – with the sound of the bell ringing out above the destruction.



Light a fire under it: Bard's son follows after him to help, only to be left dangling above the inferno that used to be Laketown. The 3D BD's MVC encode excels in giving the image a perilous sense of depth.



Face-to-face: As Smaug snakes through the village and focuses his rage on Bard the Bowman, this hi-def platter lets you really appreciate the intricate details in the dragon's scaly hide.



Taking aim: It all comes down to this – one man, one arrow and one dragon. As climaxes go it's pretty stirring stuff – only this is happening at the start of the film rather than at the end...

locations feels entirely natural and gives every shot an involving sense of space.

Colours are also extremely well saturated, feeling every bit as bold as they do in *The Hobbit*'s 2D version. Contrast levels are also spot-on, providing plenty of deep blacks to offset the vibrant reds and yellows seen during Smaug's night attack on Laketown (Chapters 1-2, see above).

While the 2.40:1-framed 2D version lacks the additional sense of three-dimensional space, it remains a peerless Blu-ray presentation packed with pixel-sharp detail.

Audio: As with the previous Blu-rays in the trilogy, *...The Battle of the Five Armies* boasts a boisterous DTS-HD MA 7.1 soundtrack (which means that the original Dolby Atmos cinema mix is M.I.A.). Whether it's dealing with the clash between the Orcs and the combined forces of Elf, Dwarf and Man (Chapters 22-24 and 27-28), or the whispering voices that haunt the mind of Thorin during his dragon-sickness (Chapter 26), the mix engages your speakers with precisely placed spatial effects and crisp, high-frequency details. LFE effects are constant and bring weight to the many action scenes – although (and this is a complaint that was levelled at the first two movies) the bass never quite extends low enough to wake a Balrog.



Peter Jackson directs his stars

Extras: There are some interesting extras here, but nothing too in-depth. *New Zealand: Home of Middle-earth, Part 3* (six minutes) offers a final guide to the film's locations; *Recruiting the Five Armies* (12 minutes) focuses on the film's army of extras; *A Six-Part Saga* (10 minutes) discusses the connections that run through Jackson's six Tolkien films; *A Seventeen-Year Journey* (nine minutes) looks back across the making of the six films; and *The Last Goodbye: Behind the Scenes* (11 minutes) looks at the making of the song that plays over the end credits.

There's also a music video and trailer.





As usual, the best Blu-ray extras have been held back for the Extended Edition



Legolas's longbow should come with an elf warning



HCC Verdict

The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies 3D
→ Warner Bros. → All-region BD
→ £28 Approx

WE SAY: A spectacular Blu-ray presentation of a disappointing end to Jackson's fantasy saga

Movie ★★☆☆☆
Picture ★★★★★
Audio ★★★★½
Extras ★★☆☆☆
Overall ★★★☆☆



Arcade Action

Bigscreen home entertainment isn't just about movies. Check out this game vying for time on your cinema system

Bloodborne

From Software/Sony Computer Entertainment → PS4 → £55 Approx



If Mario Bava was making videogames today, we suspect he'd be producing something like *Bloodborne*. This third-person action-role-player is crawling with Euro-horror inflections, an unsettling miasma of confusing cobbled streets and Gothic architecture, demons, monsters and were-things.

Bloodborne unfolds into a huge unforgiving world, with secrets that take time to discover and fully comprehend. You'll run and dodge, hack and slash, and die repeatedly... then die some more. To survive the plague-ravaged city of Yharnam and take down patrolling horrors, you'll need to become adept with an impressive armoury of weapons, including pistols, cannons and saw cleavers. There are no shields, because you're forever on the offensive. There are traps everywhere, puzzles to solve, levers to flip and Blood Vials to collect.

But that's not the half of it. While there is an offline mode, the game really starts to show its mettle when you're online. Through the use of a beckoning bell, you can summon help from other players. Cleverly, *Bloodborne*'s community of players can leave notes of advice or warning, perhaps placed just before an ambush point, which could save your life; a social mechanic first used by the game's 2009 forerunner *Demon's Souls*. You can also see spectres of other gamers, replaying their last moments before a grisly death.

Graphically the game is dense and intricate, with geographically coherent location detail. The colour palette is muted, the lighting foreboding, and there's plenty lurking in the shadows. It looks good in HD and scales well to 4K. As a surround experience, *Bloodborne* is downright chilling. Slithering, growling menace is forever circling from speaker to speaker. There's not overmuch use of a score, instead the title racks up tension through creepy ambiance.

There are caveats. The load times are slow, probably because hell itself is being poured into your PS4; it can also stutter. The game mechanics are painfully obtuse too, with obscure rewards, the value of which you'll only appreciate as you persevere through Yharnam. But the awe-inspiring nature of *Bloodborne* make such foibles easy to accommodate.

★★★★½



Orange is the New Black: Season Two

Lionsgate → Region B BD
£40 Approx



The criminally-good Netflix comedy-drama about life in a women's prison returns with a second batch of 13 episodes. As with the previous season, this three-disc Blu-ray release offers up a collection of exquisitely sharp and detailed AVC-encoded 1.78:1 Full HD transfers – although the DTS-HD MA 5.1 mixes prove slightly underwhelming when it comes to surround effects. Mediocre extras take the form of cast commentaries on two episodes and four behind-the-scenes featurettes.

★★★½

Broadchurch: Series Two

Acorn → Region B BD
£25 Approx



The events of the first series continue to have repercussions in this follow-up eight-parter, despite detective duo Miller 'n' Hardy having a new mystery to unravel. Writer Chris Chibnall struggles at times to keep all the plates spinning (and introduces a couple of side-plots that could easily have been excised), but this is still classy TV drama. This double-disc release features lossy 5.1 and stereo mixes, sun-dappled and generally sharp HD visuals (although the cinematography is sometimes deliberately hazy) and a good batch of extras.

★★★½

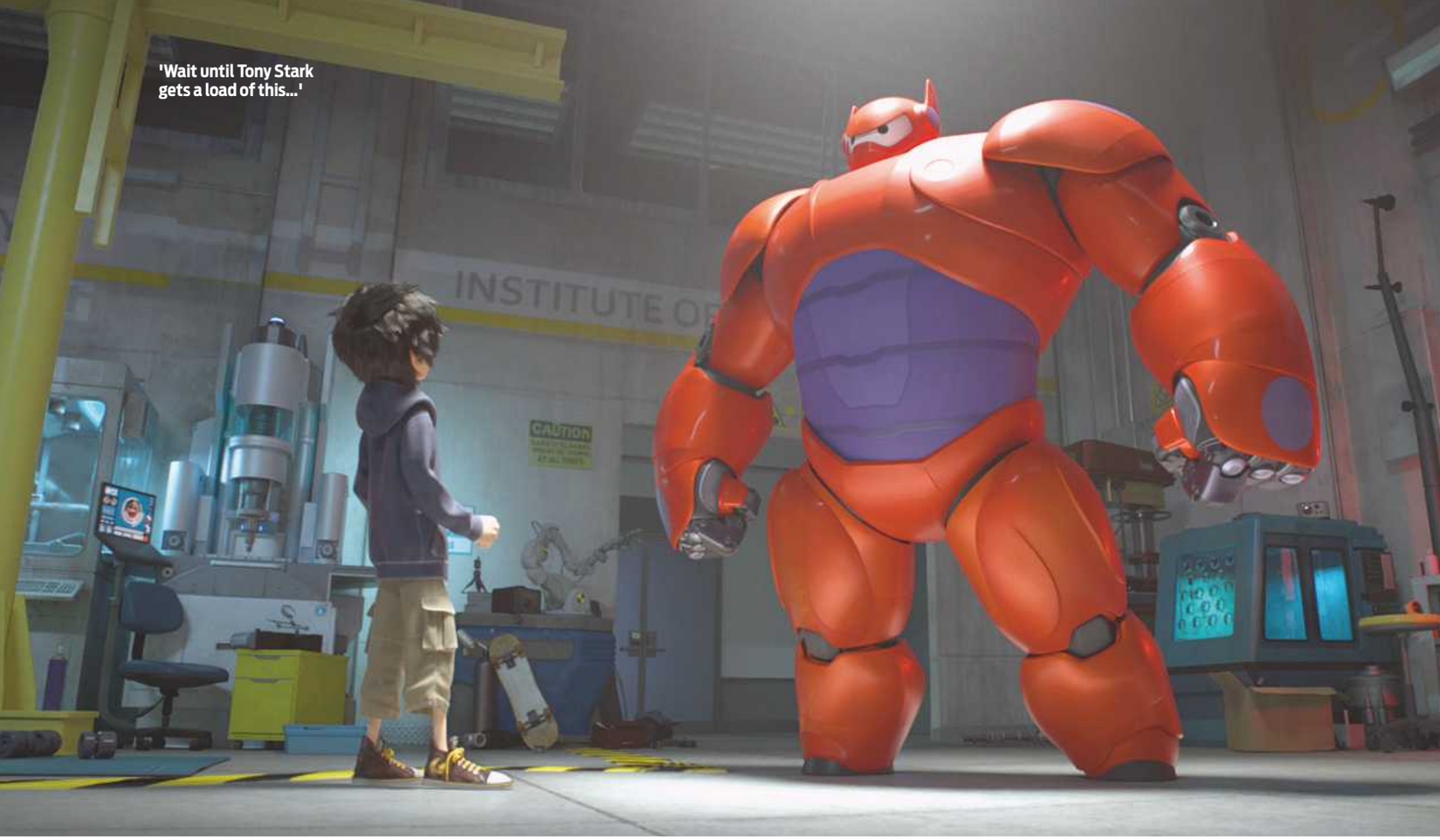
The Musketeers: Series Two

BBC Worldwide → All-region BD
£40 Approx



This swashbuckling romp had a big hurdle to overcome after losing Peter Capaldi (who played Cardinal Richelieu in Series One) to *Doctor Who*. Thankfully, this second 10-episode run wastes no time in finding a fitting successor in Marc Warren's devious Rochefort and embarks on another batch of rollicking 17th century adventures. While the lack of 5.1 audio is annoying, this three-disc Blu-ray set's 1080i50 imagery and DTS-HD MA 2.0 surround sonics are very hard to fault.

★★★½


'Wait until Tony Stark gets a load of this...'

Disney's junior Avengers assemble

Superhero cartoon is more successful at tackling matters of the heart than battling supervillains

→ Big Hero 6



Boy genius Hiro Hamada is content to while away his talents building robots to compete in illegal brawls until his older brother Tadashi invites him along to see the work he's been doing at the 'Nerd Lab' at San Fransokyo Tech. There he introduces Hiro to fellow students Go-Go, Honey Lemon and Wasabi, as well as Baymax, a cuddly nursing robot he has been working on.

Inspired to join his sibling, Hiro lands a place at San Fransokyo Tech, but his joy is short-lived when Tadashi is killed in an explosion on campus. So, when a grieving Hiro accidentally activates Baymax, and the pair discover that a kabuki-masked mystery man was responsible for the blast, Hiro sets about bringing him to justice by giving Baymax and Tadashi's student friends some superhero upgrades.

Big Hero 6 is at its best when it focuses on the unlikely friendship that develops between Hiro and Michelin Man-styled inflatable robot Baymax. The mishaps and scrapes they endure together in the first half of the film provide its funniest moments, and Baymax's attempts to nurse Hiro through his grief give the film a surprisingly touching emotional core.

Ironically, for a film based on a Marvel comic book, it's when the story shifts its focus from this to super-heroics that it falters a tad. Suddenly it becomes much more formulaic – culminating in a climax that feels pieced together from those of other, recent Marvel live-action movies. Yet even when the action is at its most generic, the witty script will keep you chuckling along with the on-screen action. And if a sequel does come about, the filmmakers will hopefully find a way of creating action that is as imaginative and entertaining as these enjoyable characters deserve.

Picture: *Big Hero 6* looks absolutely superb on Blu-ray, with the disc's 2.39:1-framed 1080p encode showcasing flawless digital artistry in every single shot. No matter what the film throws at it, from night-time car chases (Chapter 8) to flights through bright blue skies (Chapter 10), the encode never falters when it comes to colour fidelity or intricate detailing. In other words, as with the likes of *Frozen* and *Tangled* before it, *Big Hero 6* is yet another reference-quality visual experience from Disney.

The film is also being released on 3D Blu-ray in the UK, but Disney was unable to provide us with a copy of that release for review.

Audio: Despite being released in cinemas in Dolby Atmos, *Big Hero 6* arrives on Blu-ray with a DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 soundtrack. It's a shame that AV-holics don't get the chance to experience the 'full-fat' version, but we can't imagine too many other complaints given that the Blu-ray audio delivers a cavalcade of impactful surround effects and taut, punchy bass.

Extras: Disappointing. All that's on offer are two behind-the-scenes featurettes, four deleted scenes, a trailer, a music video and the animated short *Feast*, which accompanied *Big Hero 6* in cinemas.



Believe it or not, he's actually one of the good guys!

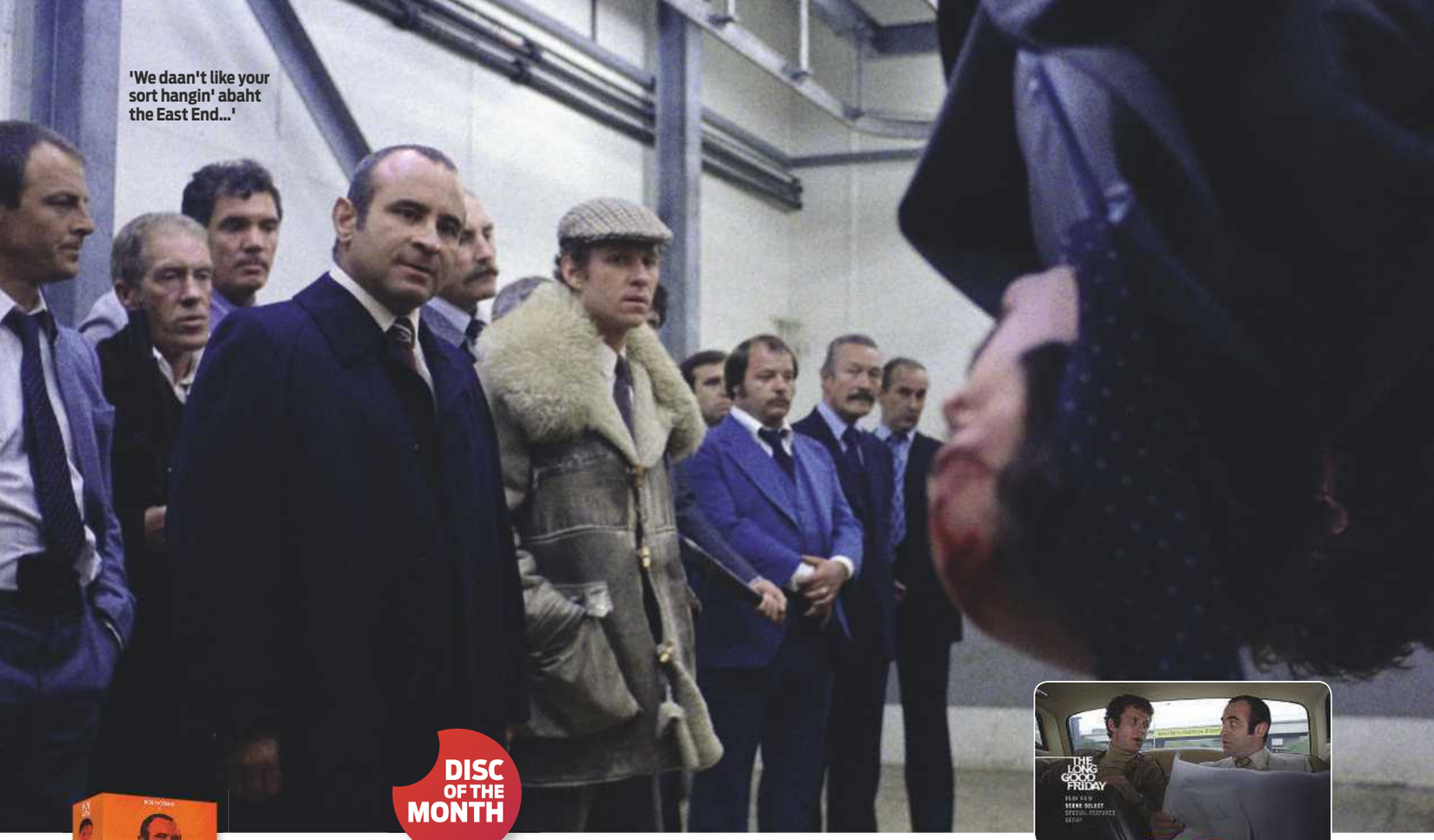


HCC Verdict

Big Hero 6
→ Walt Disney → All-region BD
→ £25 Approx

WE SAY: Another enjoyable Disney cartoon, another reference-quality BD. But Atmos would have been nice

Movie ★★★★☆
Picture ★★★★★
Audio ★★★★★
Extras ★★☆☆☆
Overall ★★★★☆



'We daan't like your sort hangin' abaht the East End...'

DISC OF THE MONTH



Would you Adam and Eve it?

New transfers and exclusive extras ensure that this boxset is well worth your bread and honey





HCC VERDICT

The Long Good Friday + Mona Lisa
→ Arrow Video → Region B BD & R2 DVD → £35 Approx
WE SAY: This stacked Blu-ray boxset makes for one heck of a tribute to the brilliance of the late Bob Hoskins

Movie ★★★★★
Picture ★★★★★
Audio ★★★½☆
Extras ★★★★★
Overall ★★★★★

→ The Long Good Friday + Mona Lisa

The Long Good Friday stars Bob Hoskins as Harold Shand, an old-fashioned East End gangster who aspires to become a legitimate businessman. With the financial support of the American Mafia he dreams of renovating London's derelict Docklands, but not even Shand can keep things on track when his business is targeted by the IRA.

Made in the tail-end of the 1970s and finally released into cinemas in 1980, *The Long Good Friday* is a surprisingly prescient film that somehow managed to predict the mood of Thatcher's Britain within the milieu of the gangster movie. And what a gangster movie it is. From Barry Keefe's smart script and memorable dialogue ('Look at you... The Mafia? I've s**t 'em!') to the wholly believable performances that director John Mackenzie elicits from his cast, the film continually excels – a fact that is made even clearer when you compare *The Long Good Friday* to the glut of sub-standard British crime flicks it inspired over the past decade or so.

Hoskins is on excellent form again in Neil Jordan's marvellous 1986 British noir, *Mona Lisa*. Here he plays George, a tough ex-con with a good heart who falls for Simone (Cathy Tyson), the high-class call girl he is hired to chauffeur between clients. Like all the best film noirs, *Mona Lisa* is a tale of doomed romance, but the way in which Jordan's film spins this familiar tale and the beautiful performances of its two leads lifts it to an altogether different level.

Picture: *The Long Good Friday* and *Mona Lisa* have both been exclusively restored by Arrow Films in 2K.

Given the label's track record, it should hardly come as a shock to learn that both 1.85:1-framed AVC encodes look first rate. Whether it's the expertly-resolved grain and improved stability of *The Long Good Friday* or the brighter palette and added clarity that characterises *Mona Lisa*'s visuals, both retain an authentically film-like sheen on Blu-ray and have been cleaned up magnificently.

Audio: Being primarily dialogue-driven affairs, neither film would really benefit from 5.1 remixes, so what really matters is that the LPCM mono soundtracks have been restored as efficiently as the image quality, ensuring perfect clarity throughout and no unwanted pops, crackles or hisses.

Extras: *The Long Good Friday* offers up a director's commentary; a 55-min retrospective documentary; three interviews; three trailers; and a look at dialogue changes made for the US cinema release.

Mona Lisa adds a commentary by the director and leading man; three interviews and the trailer.

Exclusive to this limited edition boxset is a third Blu-ray platter containing an archival Q&A with Bob Hoskins and John Mackenzie; five further interviews; and a hi-def presentation of *Apaches*, Mackenzie's grim 1977 public information film aimed at warning kids about the dangers of playing in farms.

The set also includes an excellent 100-page book containing essays about the films, reviews and even the *Cockney Rhyming Slang Glossary* produced for the US video release of *The Long Good Friday*.

The Drop

Twentieth Century Fox → All-region BD
£25 Approx



This excellent crime drama stars Tom Hardy as a lonely bartender who works for his cousin (James Gandolfini) in a Brooklyn bar used as a money drop by Chechen mobsters. When the bar is robbed, Hardy's character finds himself up to his neck in trouble – a situation not helped by the arrival of the menacing ex-boyfriend of the woman (Noomi Rapace) he has fallen for. Shot using Arri Alexa cameras, *The Drop*'s 2.40:1 Full HD encode may be deliberately stark and gloomy, but it's also packed with intricate detail. An informative chat-track from the director and writer heads up the extras.

★★★★☆

Big Eyes

Entertainment in Video → Region B BD
£25 Approx



Just as we were getting ready to give up on Tim Burton altogether, he goes and gives us his best film in years. Like 1994's sublime *Ed Wood*, it's another unconventional biopic based on a true story so wild that you simply couldn't make it up – in this case the bizarre story of American artist Margaret Keane, whose husband Walter shot to fame by passing off her work as his own. While this Blu-ray is a bit light on extras (just a 22-minute *Making of...* and a half-hour compilation of two Q&As), the 1080p encode bursts with fine detail and bright colours, while the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio is agreeably lively.

★★★½☆

The Tales of Hoffman

StudioCanal → Region B BD
£25 Approx



We don't often cover opera Blu-rays in *HCC*, but this one happens to have been produced and directed by the legendary British filmmaking team of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. Admirers of Jacques Offenbach's opera and the Powell and Pressburger films will find plenty to savour about this hi-def release, the centrepiece of which is a gorgeous new 4K restoration of the film's original 'three-strip' Technicolor negatives – a process which also led to the addition of rare excised material from the Third Act. Extras include interviews with Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker.

★★★★☆

The Offense

Eureka! The Masters of Cinema Series
Region B BD & R2 DVD → £23 Approx



Adapted from a stage play by *Z-Cars* writer John Hopkins, this tough psychological thriller stars Sean Connery as a police detective who beats to death the chief suspect in an investigation into a series of attacks on young children. Visually, director Sidney Lumet's film is every bit as dark as the subject matter it explores, resulting in a rather drab and colourless 1.66:1-framed 1080p transfer on this Blu-ray. Bonus features include a lossless music and effects track, four interviews and a booklet containing a new essay about the film and a 1973 Q&A with the director.

★★★½☆



Period piece is running on empty

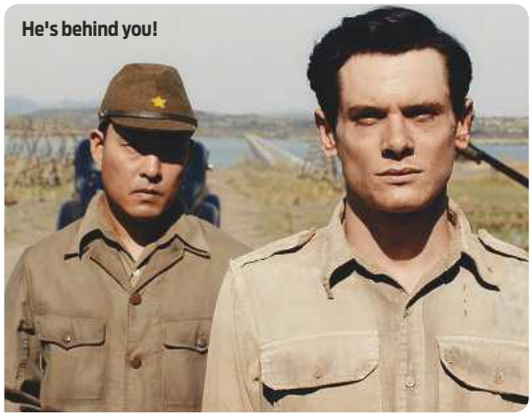
Angelina Jolie's true-story WW2 drama looks sumptuous but fails to fly high

→ Unbroken

Telling the real story of Italian-American Olympic athlete turned WW2 USAF bombardier Louis Zamperini – who endured and survived more than two years in a Japanese POW camp – *Unbroken* was at one stage tipped for Oscar recognition. Yet director Angelina Jolie went away empty-handed, and it's easy to see why. While handsomely-staged (especially the aerial combat scenes) and well-acted, it never really grips in the way that it should, focusing too much on hammering home the 'never give up' life lesson instead of nailing the dramas of Zamperini's remarkable tale. You'll end up wondering what a director like Oliver Stone would have done with the source material.

Picture: *Skyfall* cinematographer Roger Deakins delivers some stunning images here, and Universal's 1080p Blu-ray encode forwards them on to your cinema screen with panache. This is a picture of immense clarity, with not a bead of sweat, airplane belt buckle or blade of grass out of place. There's a clean look to it which is utterly beguiling. Tonally, it largely opts for a distinctively warmer colour palette than many recent war movies (which makes for a nice change), but the orangey hues don't come at the expense of impressive black levels

Audio: *Unbroken* is Universal's debut Dolby Atmos Blu-ray release, which in truth means most of us will be sticking with the core Dolby TrueHD 7.1 mix. Thankfully, this is rather wonderful, as it knows when to go for all-out aggression and when to rely on subtle ambience to complement the visuals. Steering through the surround channels is excellent, bass is weighty and dialogue is well prioritised, although the score is a bit insipid. Given a run-through as 5.1.2 Atmos, meanwhile, the mix offers an extra level of immersion, with that additional height layer really coming into play when the onscreen action takes to the skies.


He's behind you!

Extras: Work out which icon to hit on Universal's irritating text-less menu and you can unearth a fair selection of bonus goodies, beginning with a handful of deleted scenes, before moving on to some more rewarding documentary material. The three-part *Inside Unbroken* feature (runtime approximately 26 minutes) covers plenty of ground concerning the movie's origins and production, with the middle section (*The Fight of a Storyteller: Director Angelina Jolie*) paying welcome attention to VFX creation. There's also a half-hour *Real Louis Zamperini* feature, plus some additional featurettes of only fleeting interest.





HCC Verdict

Unbroken
→ Universal Pictures → All-region BD → £25 Approx

WE SAY: The movie plays everything a tad safe, but Atmos-hedz will no doubt buy this disc regardless

Movie ★★★☆☆
Picture ★★★★★
Audio ★★★★½
Extras ★★½☆☆
Overall ★★★½☆

What We Do in the Shadows

Metrodome → Region B BD
£20 Approx



Flight of the Concords' Jemaine Clement co-writes, co-directs and co-stars in this superb mockumentary following the exploits of four vampires living together in contemporary New Zealand. Bypassing the jugular altogether, the film goes straight for the funnybone instead and delivers a brilliant mix of gags and gore that will be lapped up by genre fans. Metrodome's Blu-ray release sports an attractive 1.78:1 1080p presentation of the original digital photography, a modest DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix and plenty of extra footage that didn't make the final cut.

★★★★☆

Village of the Damned

Fabulous Films → All-region BD
£16 Approx



1995 was an odd year for fans of horror icon John Carpenter. On the one hand we got to savour his brilliant *In the Mouth of Madness*; on the other we had to endure his surprisingly bland and lifeless remake of *Village of the Damned (*itself an adaptation of John Wyndam's novel *The Midwich Cuckoos)*. Sourced from Universal, the 2.39:1-framed HD master used for this Blu-ray shows obvious (but not entirely ruinous) signs of DNR – although the disc's DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix punches well above its weight. The trailer is the disc's sole extra feature.

★★☆☆☆

Extraterrestrial

Signature Entertainment
All-region BD → £16 Approx



Canadian filmmakers the Vicious Brothers (aka Colin Minihan and Stuart Ortiz) follow up on the cult success of their handycam horror *Grave Encounters* with this sci-fi shocker that finds a group of young friends trapped in a cabin in the woods and battling for their lives against homicidal aliens. *E.T.* it definitely isn't. This UK Blu-ray release may disappoint with its complete lack of extras, but deserves praise for both its dynamic DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundtrack and its 2.40:1 1080p transfer, which does an excellent job of handling the large washes of bold colour that frequently fill the screen.

★★½☆☆

Night Train Murders

88 Films → All-region BD
£15 Approx



Two young women on an overnight train from Germany to Italy find themselves at the mercy of a pair of thugs and a mysterious older lady in this 1975 *The Last House on the Left* clone from Italian director Aldo Lado. A far more polished production than its inspiration, *Night Train Murders* benefits from the visual upgrade Blu-ray offers – although errant scanner noise indicates this disc uses the same remastered HD source used for Blue Underground's 2012 US release. LPCM mono versions of the Italian and English soundtracks are included, as are two interviews with actress Irene Miracle.

★★★☆☆



Haute couture slasher dazzles in HD

New 2K restoration ensures that Mario Bava's legendary giallo is a Blu-ray to die for

→ Blood and Black Lace

A masked killer starts knocking off beautiful models at a haute couture fashion house in Mario Bava's eye-popping 1964 proto-slasher *Blood and Black Lace* (aka *Six Women for the Murderer*).

If Bava's 1963 thriller *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* represented the first, rather tentative, steps towards the creation of the cinematic giallo, *Blood and Black Lace*'s depravity and clear emphasis on lurid style over narrative substance sees the filmmaker laying the groundwork that would inform the entire genre. Brutal and beautiful in equal measure, it remains a classic of the genre and one of Bava's very best.

Picture: As with all but one (*Bay of Blood*) of the label's previous HD Bava releases, Arrow did its own 2K restoration of *Blood and Black Lace* from the original camera negatives for this Blu-ray release.

Supervised by James White and colour-graded with the participation of Bava expert Tim Lucas, the resulting 1.66:1 1080p encode is nothing less than spectacular. Colours are brilliantly bold and vibrant, while blacks are rock solid yet holding plenty of fine detail. Film grain is well resolved.

Audio: The disc serves up a choice of LPCM 1.0 Italian and English soundtracks. As usual with Italian films of this vintage, all of the audio was recorded in post-production (with actors often speaking a variety of languages during filming). As such, the dialogue can appear rather loose against the picture in both tracks, but this is perfectly in keeping with the original materials. More importantly, both have been restored from the original optical sound negatives and sound immaculate.







HCC Verdict

Blood and Black Lace
→ Arrow Video → Region A/B BD & R1/R2 DVD → £18/£23 Approx
WE SAY: A dazzling restoration of this landmark horror flick backed up by an exhaustive array of bonus features

Movie	★★★★½
Picture	★★★★★
Audio	★★★½☆
Extras	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★½

Extras: In addition to an in-depth commentary by Bava biographer Tim Lucas, the Blu-ray also finds space for a documentary about the film and the origins of the giallo genre; a scholarly video essay entitled *Gender and Giallo* by Michael Mackenzie; audio excerpts from a panel discussion with Italian filmmakers Dario Argento, Lamberto Bava and Steve Della Casa; two episodes of a TV series looking at the career of actor Cameron Mitchell; the alternate US opening credits (sourced from Joe Dante's private print and scanned in hi-def); the trailer; and Ryan Hayson and Jon Britt's neo-giallo short *Yellow* (presented in 1080p with LPCM 2.0 audio).

The Blu-ray also comes with a 40-page booklet containing essays and interviews concerning *Blood and Black Lace*, Bava's career and Hayson and Britt's crowd-funded giallo homage. In addition to the standard Blu-ray, a limited edition steelbook is also available from the Arrow Store website.

Starscape
Home Cinema Star Ceiling Specialists



Photo courtesy of UK Home Cinema

Introduces the Infinity Fibre Optic Star Ceiling System

Lightweight panel based system enables super-fast installation even in basements with solid ceilings. Using our magnetic fixing system with lightweight resilient channel and optical joints, Infinity installs in hours rather than days.

100 twinkling stars (in four different diameters) per square metre, set against a black or blue flocked background makes the Infinity Star Ceiling system the very best in the world. Energy efficient LED light sources for classic twinkling or colour changing effects. DMX models available for integration with home automation.

For professional installation give your local AV specialist a call. Or, if you need help in planning your project contact Peter or John the Starscape directors who will be happy to help.

E: info@starscape.co.uk (01289) 332900 www.starscape.co.uk

BHFUnlimited.co.uk

Home Cinema Screen Specialists

Crosby & Bown

- Glass Bead & Matt White
- 4:3 & 16:9
- Full HD Compatible
- Full Remote Control

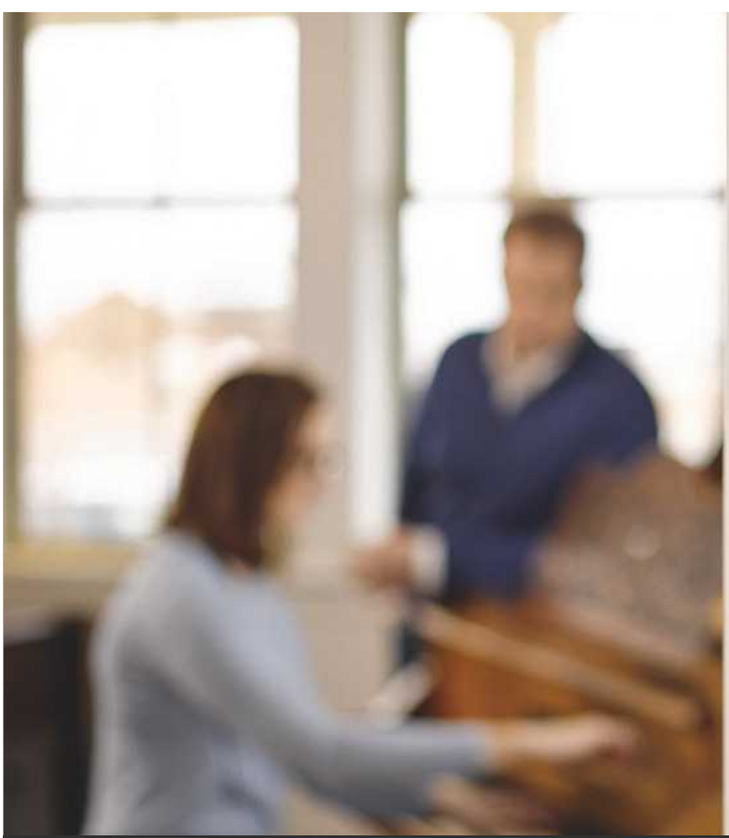


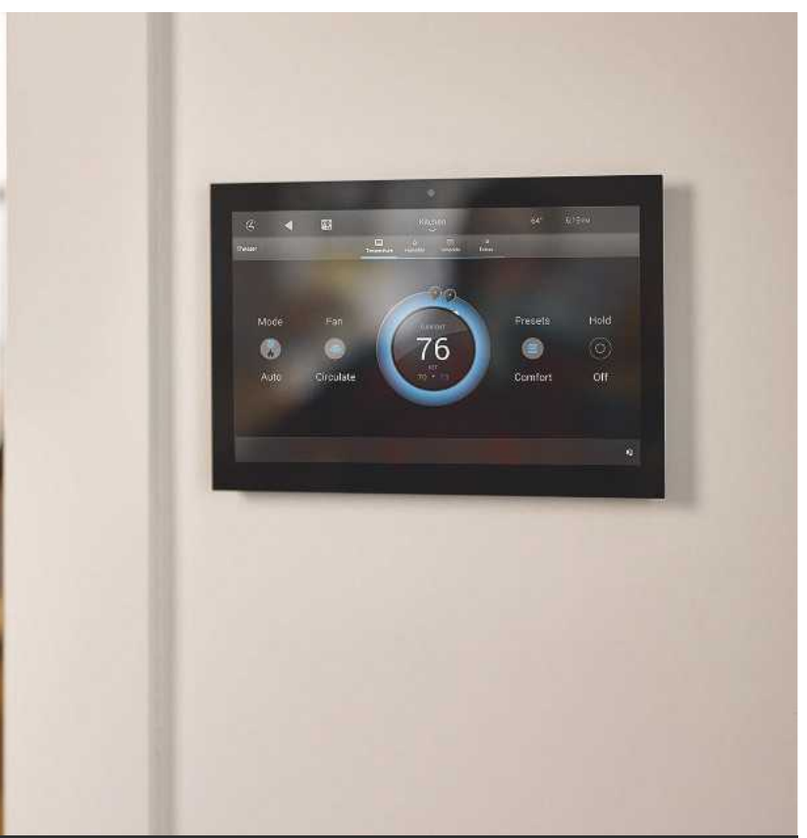
From Just £69.95

Huge Range & Next Day Delivery

01636 639 900

For competitive quotes email
sales@bhfunlimited.co.uk





PROGRESSIVE HOME TECHNOLOGY

Progressive Home Technology
The Old Saw Mill, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells Kent TN3 0JU

01892 860801
progressive-ht.com



Embracing the monster within

Breathtaking Blu-ray resuscitates an oft-overlooked take on the classic tale of terror

→ The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne


'Look into my eyes...'

What should have been a joyous event celebrating the engagement of Dr. Henry Jekyll (Udo Kier) and Miss Fanny Osbourne (Marina Pierro) is transformed into a deadly orgy of sex and violence when a depraved maniac starts assaulting the guests.

Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been adapted for the screen over 100 times now, but only a few of them linger in the mind the way this film does. While far from being a straight adaptation of the original story, Walerian Borowczyk's 1981 art-sploitation masterpiece (aka *Docteur Jekyll et les femmes* and *Blood of Dr. Jekyll*) does a better job than most of exploring the duality of the central character, pulling no punches as Hyde assaults the repressive strictures of society in the most brutal ways imaginable.



Picture: Following hot on the heels of last year's celebrated *Camera Obscura* Blu-ray boxset, this hi-def release sees Arrow giving the deluxe treatment to yet another Walerian Borowczyk film. Restored using a new 2K scan of the original camera negative, with colour grading overseen by director of photography Noël Véry, the platter's AVC-encoded 1.66:1 1080p encode is gorgeous, replicating the film's purposefully diffuse and dreamlike visuals while retaining an impeccable delicacy to fine details.

Audio: The excellent quality of the Blu-ray's French and English LPCM mono soundtracks is down to the work put into clean up and restoration. These mixes may not be reference-quality but still hold up well – particularly when it comes to the movie's striking score.

Extras: This remarkable Blu-ray comes loaded with a brain-boggling array of extras. There's far too much to go into detail here, but among the goodies on offer are an audio commentary assembled from a 1981 interview with the director and newly recorded interviews with other members of the film's crew; a rediscovered Borowczyk short from 1979; video essays about the film, the filmmaker and avant-garde composer Bernard Parmegiani; new interviews with Kier and Pierro; the trailer (with three audio options); and a superb 40-page booklet.

HCC Verdict

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne
→ Arrow Academy → Region A/B BD & R1/R2 DVD → £18 Approx

WE SAY: A truly sin-sational HD debut for this hypnotic mix of art and horror

Movie ★★★★☆
Picture ★★★★½
Audio ★★★½☆
Extras ★★★★★
Overall ★★★★½

Midnight Run

Second Sight → Region B BD
£25 Approx



This brash buddy comedy starring Robert de Niro and Charles Grodin has amassed a legion of fans since its 1988 release, and they will love this belated BD outing. Specialist label Second Sight serves up a 1080p encode that retains the film's never-intrusive grain and proves a clear step up in detail over previous DVD incarnations, plus a DTS-HD MA 5.1 track that belts out Danny Elfman's bluesy score with gusto. But perhaps the real highlights are the new interviews with actors John Ashton, Joe Pantoliano, Yaphet Kotto, Charles Grodin and screenwriter George Gallo. Candid, witty and much appreciated.

★★★★★

Sweet Smell of Success

Arrow Academy → Region B BD
£18 Approx



Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis star in this 1957 noir about a powerful New York newspaper columnist who takes against his sister's musician boyfriend, and the sleazy PR agent who sees it as an opportunity to win the writer's favour. Based on a 4K scan of the original camera negatives, the Blu-ray's AVC 1.66:1 1080p encode is, in a word, flawless, while the LPCM mono soundtrack does the barbed dialogue proud. Quality extras include commentary on selected scenes, an appreciation of the film and a 1986 TV documentary about the director.

★★★★☆

Dead Man

Soda Pictures → Region B BD
£20 Approx



Originally available as part of Soda Pictures' *Jim Jarmusch Collection* Blu-ray boxset last year, the hi-def version of the indie filmmaker's 1995 existential Western has finally received a standalone release. Although the framing appears to have been altered slightly from 1.85:1 to 1.78:1 for this Blu-ray, we were still impressed by the 1080p transfer's fidelity to the source material, capturing every grainy nuance of Robby Muller's stunning black-and-white photography. However, while the DTS-HD MA 2.0 soundtrack has no problem with the film's superb score, dialogue is dialed a little low in the mix for our tastes.

★★★☆☆



SAMSUNG

SUHDTV 4K

JS9000 SERIES • CURVED 4K UHD TV

Welcome to a new world of picture quality. The revolutionary S9000 SUHD TV doesn't just raise the bar, it changes the game. This is a new benchmark for design with stunning looks from whatever angle you look at it and picture quality previously only seen in professional editing suites. It's a new world of colour, brightness and contrast, immersed in a sleek and elegant package.

Prices from £2599

NEW

48 55 65

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM FOR LATEST TV PROMOTIONS & PRICES



SONY

4K

X85C SERIES • 4K UHD TV

Experience 4K by Sony and there's no looking back. Bring all your favourite TV entertainment to life with fine detail and exquisite colour. Effortlessly explore apps, games and the fast-growing choice of broadcast and internet 4K content that's coming your way.

Prices from £1799

55 65 75

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

Also Available X83C Series
43 & 49 • 4K UHD TV



NEW

SONY

NEW

X93C SERIES • 4K UHD TV

Prices from £2599

The new X93C 4K 3D TV includes Sony's powerful 4K processor X1 chip designed for optimal playback of 4K material and upscaling of lower resolution content to near 4K resolution along with Triluminos colour technology, Motionflow XR1200Hz and edge-lit LED backlighting. This Android TV lets you connect and enjoy any content, from apps to movies, between different Android devices – the simplest and easiest way ever.

The 'wedge' design accommodates the all-important speakers which are the compatible with the new Hi-resolution audio specifications, with the ability to upscale audio to better than CD quality.

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

4K

55 65

NEW Prices from £459



SONY • W70C SERIES • FULL HD TV

The new Sony W70C Full HD LED TV series boasts pin sharp films and programmes all wrapped in clean Sony design. Full HD 1080p renders everything in stunning detail and with Motionflow technology even fast-moving action like games and sports flow across the screen. ClearAudio+ fine-tunes the sound for an immersive, emotionally enriching experience.

32 40 48

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

Prices from £1999



PANASONIC • AX902 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

The new Panasonic AX902 4K LED TV series combines excellent 4K picture quality with versatile networking features and innovative functions in a stylish design. Includes Freetime built-in, so you can get the advantages of roll back TV (for the past seven days) and easy access to all major catch-up services directly from the Freetime programme guide.

55 65

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

NEW



Prices from £1249

SAMSUNG • JU7000 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

Representing the next generation of superior flat screen UHD, the U7000 offers a dramatically enhanced viewing experience. Pictures are brighter and contrast is deeper with better blacks and UHD offering four times more detail than Full HD. Brighter, richer colours, and the versatility of Smart Hub join forces to create a TV that can fulfil all of your expectations.

40 48 55 65 75 85

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE



NEW

£999 OR LESS

OPTOMA • HD50 • DLP PROJECTOR

Created for movie-lovers, the new HD50 brings digital cinema quality images into the comfort of your home.

4K



NEW

£5849 OR LESS

SONY • VPL-VW300ES • 4K SXRD PROJECTOR

Bring the truly cinematic quality of 4K to your own home with the Sony VPL-VW300ES Home Cinema projector.



£2799 OR LESS

SONY • VPL-HW55ES • SXRD PROJECTOR

A fantastic option for movie lovers who want an incredible cinematic experience at home, far beyond the reach of TV.

PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDED VALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO). ADVERT VALID UNTIL 03/06/2015. E&OE

click & collect
NOW AVAILABLE

www.SSAV.com

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION



ARCAM • FMJ UDP411 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

With more than ten years of digital video experience, not to mention global recognition of its efforts, Arcam is proud to announce the arrival of its newest disc player, the UDP411.

Also Available: NAD T 567



MARANTZ • UD7007 • UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER

Enjoy exceptional sound and picture quality from many formats including SACD, DVD-Audio, 3D Blu-ray and your home network.

Also Available: DENON DBT-3313UD



PANASONIC • DMP-BDT370 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

New top of the range model featuring 4K upscaling along with playback for 4K JPEG photos, 2D-3D conversion and advanced smart functionality.

Also Available: PANASONIC DMP-BDT460 & DMP-BDT700



PIONEER • BDP-LX88 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

New universal disc player compatible with SACD and DVD-Audio discs plus lossless high-res support up to 192 kHz/24 bit resolution.

Also Available: PIONEER BDP-LX58



SONY • BDP-S7200 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

The Sony BDP-S7200 3D Blu-ray Player with 4K upscaling and powerful smart features - it will be be the centre piece of your home entertainment system.

Also Available: SONY BDP-S4500 & BDP-S6500



YAMAHA • BD-A1040 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Universal player with top-class audio performance, Miracast™ compatibility and advanced network functions such as WiFi built in and Bluetooth® built in.

Also Available: YAMAHA BD-S677



ARCAM • FMJ AVR750 • AV RECEIVER

7.1-channel AV receiver combines 4K "Ultra HD" upscaling and 3D video capability with Arcam's legendary sound quality.

Also Available: ARCAM FMJ AVR380 & AVR450



DENON • AVR-X4100W • AV RECEIVER

Enjoy Dolby Atmos for immaculate audio, Spotify Connect support, Bluetooth and DSD streaming.

Also Available: DENON AVR-X5200W



NAD • T 758 • AV RECEIVER

AV receiver featuring NAD's Modular Design Construction for future upgrades along with exceptional sound quality.

Also Available: NAD T 748V2 & T 787



PIONEER • SC-LX58 • AV RECEIVER

New 9.2-channel Network receiver with with Class D Amplification, Wi-Fi, AirPlay, DLNA, Bluetooth and Dolby Atmos® upgradability.

Also Available: PIONEER SC-LX88



SONY • STR-DN1050 • AV RECEIVER

7.1-channel AV receiver with Bluetooth and NFC compatibility, for instant wireless playback from any compatible device.

Also Available: SONY STR-DN1060



YAMAHA • RX-A3040 • AV RECEIVER

New AV receiver with built-in Wi-Fi, 11.2 channel expandability, highest grade construction and Dolby Atmos® upgradability.

Also Available: YAMAHA RX-A1040 & RX-A2040

REL • S5
SUBWOOFER

The S5 from REL exceeds the mandate for mid-level models and crosses this model into true reference quality, producing exceptionally low bass with tremendous impact and speed. Add REL Longbow for wireless connectivity.

£1599
OR LESS



REL • LONGBOW
WIRELESS SUBWOOFER ADAPTOR

Easy-to-use, ultra high quality wireless system that frees your system from placement limitations imposed by conventional cables.





B&W • ASW10CM S2 • SUBWOOFER

A versatile and powerful subwoofer featuring a 10" Kevlar driver controlled by a highly efficient 500W audiophile Class D amplifier.

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE

Real Stores

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have 26 stores nationwide with plans to open more during 2015. Each carries the best in home cinema and Hi-Fi equipment on display, ready for you to watch, listen to and compare in our dedicated demonstration rooms.

Real People

Our staff are friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about music and film and the equipment needed to get the most out of your collection. They will be delighted to assist you in making the right selection to ensure you enjoy your system for years to come.

Real Products

A wide selection of products from the world's leading manufacturers is in stock and available for you to take home. We also offer a delivery and installation service as well as a convenient on-line click and reserve option for many of our products.

Real Value

Fantastic value for money is our aim. Although we remain independent, you will be pleasantly surprised just how competitive we can be - with the added benefit of seeing, hearing and touching the product before you buy, and someone to help if things go wrong.

click & collect
NOW AVAILABLE

www.SSAV.com



B&W • MT-60D • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Speaker package combining M-1 speakers with the stunning power and control of a PV1D subwoofer. Available in black or white.



KEF • E305 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

The E Series packs uniquely advanced technologies in highly distinctive satellite speakers and a powered subwoofer.



MONITOR AUDIO • RADIUS R90HT1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Award-winning speaker package comprising four Radius 90 satellites, Radius 200 centre speaker and Radius 390 subwoofer.



POLK • TL1600 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

The TL1600 is everything you need to get started, and it packs the accumulated wallop of Polk's 30 years of speaker know-how.



Q ACOUSTICS • 3000 SERIES 5.1 CINEMA PACK

Perfect for every occasion, the new 3000 Series 5.1 Cinema Pack will unleash the full potential of your home cinema electronics.

BLUESOUND

HiFi for a wireless generation

HIGH RES AUDIO

"There's a new leader in the wireless multi-room music market - Bluesound combines high-res audio and ease of use in one impressive system."
WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2015

Stream your digital music collection, internet radio and cloud music services. Bluesound is simple to setup and easily expandable and supports 24-bit/192kHz studio master recordings in lossless FLAC format for crystal clear audiophile-grade sound to any room in your home. PRICES FROM £399



SONOS

THE WIRELESS Hi-Fi SYSTEM



The Sonos Wireless HiFi System delivers all the music on earth, in every room, with deep, richly textured sound. PRICES FROM £169

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2014

Wireless Extender NEW Boost £79



ARCAM • SOLO BAR • SOUNDBAR

Not only an ideal solution to improve on the mediocre sound quality of modern TVs, Arcam's superb engineering means it can also be used as a high quality stereo system all over the house. Optional subwoofer also available.



NEW £799 OR LESS

aptX csr Bluetooth

CANTON • DM 50 (BLACK GLASS) • SOUNDBASE

The Canton DM 50 sets a new standard for TV sound. Intended to be positioned under a TVs pedestal stand, the DM 50 creates a convincing, room filling sound.



NEW £399 OR LESS

NEW BLACK GLASS FINISH

aptX csr Bluetooth

PSB • VS21 • SOUNDBASE

PSB has been creating award-winning home theatre speaker systems for decades, and the VS21 brings this extraordinary experience to the sound bar category.



aptX csr Bluetooth

NEW £499 OR LESS

Q ACOUSTICS • MEDIA 4 • SOUNDBAR

The new Q Acoustics Media 4 is a high performance Soundbar designed to deliver high fidelity reproduction of music, and high quality audio from a TV or set top box, tablets and smartphones.



aptX csr Bluetooth

£399 OR LESS

SAMSUNG • HW-J7500 • CURVED SOUNDBAR/SUB

Create cinema-style sound in your living room enjoying a more immersive experience thanks to built-in side speakers and an impressive eight-speaker-design.



NEW £749 OR LESS

multi room

Bluetooth

YAMAHA • YSP-2500 DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

Reproduces overwhelmingly real presence and impact-filled bass sound. Two-unit YSP with ultra-refined design and high-grade aluminium chassis. Bluetooth® equipped, capable of wireless music play and App control.



aptX csr Bluetooth

£SSAV .COM

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2014

The innovative electrical retailing awards 2014 WINNER
Best Independent Retailer (Large) Consumer Electronics

Best Independent Retailer (Large) Consumer Electronics
Award Winner 2014

Stores Nationwide

We have a national network of stores and a hard-won reputation for outstanding customer service.

Website

Visit our website for a streamlined on-line experience with an outstanding product selection plus the latest product news, store infomation and a click and collect option.

Bishop's Stortford• 01279 506576
Bristol• 0117 974 3727
Brighton 01273 733338
Bromley 020 8290 1988
Cambridge• 01223 304770
Chelsea• 020 7352 9466
Cheltenham• 01242 241171
Chorleywood• 0845 5046364
Epsom• 01372 720720
Exeter• 01392 218895
Guildford 01483 536666
Holborn• 020 7837 7540
Kingston• 020 8547 0717
Leeds (Wetherby) 01937 586886
Loughton• 020 8532 0770
Maidstone 01622 686366
Norwich• 01603 767605
Oxford 01865 241773
Reading• 0118 959 7768
Sevenoaks 01732 459555
Sheffield• 0114 255 5861
Southampton• 023 8033 7770
Tunbridge Wells 01892 531543
Weybridge 01932 840859
Witham (Essex) 01376 501733
Yeovil• 01935 700078

VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM FOR STORE ADDRESS DETAILS, OPENING HOURS AND BRANDS STOCKED

• THESE STORES ARE FRANCHISED AND OPERATE UNDER A LICENCE AGREEMENT TO SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION

Please Note: Some brands/products are not available at all stores. Special/added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWA00).

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 03/06/2015. E&OE

SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION

Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

www.hifichoice.co.uk

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE...

to getting the best possible sound from your hi-fi, whether you're buying, tuning or tweaking







Fuel your passion for sound and make your music sing **OUT NOW!**



twitter.com@HiFiChoiceMag

facebook.com/hificchoice.co.uk

SELECT

➜**GEAR GUIDE** **TELEVISIONS** From entry-level 40in LEDs to flagship 4K monsters **BLU-RAY PLAYERS** Which deck rules the roost? **PROJECTORS** It's time to blow up your video! **AV RECEIVERS** 5.1, 7.1, 9.2 – we've got all the options covered **SPEAKERS** Killer surround sound setups for all rooms and budgets **PVRs** Including super-slim Freeview boxes and Sky+HD **AND MORE!**



HCC RATINGS KEY...

Outstanding	★★★★★
Above average	★★★★½
Acceptable	★★★½
Disappointing	★★½
Dire	★½

Top 10 TELEVISIONS

All prices are approx and may have changed

1 NEW ENTRY



Samsung UE65JS9500 → £6,000

★★★★★

It's not cheap, but that's the only real downer about Samsung's startling new range-topper. The super-bright 4K panel is ready for incoming HDR/UHD BD content and the revamped Smart system is a winner, too. *HCC #246*

2



Sony KD-65X9005B → £3,600 ★★★★★
A groundbreaking set from Sony. The 'Wedge' cabinet design affords room for a best-in-class audio performance from the side-mounted speakers, while imagery is hard to fault. *HCC #236*

3



Samsung UE55HU7500 → £2,300 ★★★★★
Don't want the curved form or higher price of the HU8500 range? Then step down to this flat model. No One Connect box, but otherwise it's equally impressive in PQ terms. *HCC #239*

4



Panasonic TX-42AS600 → £430 ★★★★½
An example of the value that can be found in modern-day Full HD sets. This 42-incher offers the best elements of Panasonic's Smart system, dynamic images and a great price. *HCC #240*

5



LG 65UB980V → £3,000 ★★★★½
LG's 65in 4K display hides its size well courtesy of a super-cool bezel/stand design. Performance is generally excellent, barring a few backlight niggles, and the onboard speakers are fab. *HCC #241*

6



LG 55EC930V → £2,000 ★★★★½
OLED at an attainable price (well, almost), this 55-incher employs LG's WebOS platform and curved design. Full HD resolution, but the picture quality is stunning at times. *HCC #243*

7



Linsar X24-DVD → £300 ★★★★½
Many brands ignore screen sizes below 32in, so credit to Brit corp Linsar for releasing this 24in DVD-spinning Smart LED screen with punchy onboard speaker system. *HCC #244*

8



Panasonic TX-55AX902 → £3,000 ★★★★☆
Superior screen uniformity and crystal-clear detailing abound with Panasonic's pricey flagship LED screen, but motion processing isn't perfect. *HCC #244*

9



Finlux 50F8075-T → £600 ★★★★☆
The best screen we've seen yet from the direct-retail brand, this 50-incher matches its affordability with a great user interface and solid, but not awe-inspiring, HD visuals. *HCC #234*

10



Samsung UE40H6400 → £650 ★★★★☆
This mid-market TV will probably sell like hotcakes. It ignores 4K in favour of Full HD, and combines a pleasing AV performance with plenty of useful Smart features. *HCC #236*

Tech Info: Televisions



What? No plasma?: The TV market is now dominated by LED-lit LCD screens. Manufacture and sale of plasma display panels (PDPs), which previously came into play above 42in, has ceased, although you may still find some end-of-line stock. With LED comes newer technologies. 4K models with a native resolution of 3,840 x 2,160 should at least be on your audition list if you're thinking of a new display; curved models are also a consideration if you want to really impress the neighbours. OLED technology is championed by LG.



Active or Passive: At the beginning of the 3D era, most TVs featured the Active system that uses relatively expensive, powered 3D specs to deliver full-res images to each eye. Passive 3D TVs, which are now more common, have a filter over the screen and use non-powered specs with polarising filters. The glasses are cheap as chips, but the resolution of Full HD 3D is halved to 540 lines horizontally (but remains at 1,920 vertically). The same halving occurs with a 4K screen. Some brands offer both Passive and Active models, depending on the panel used. Glasses-free 3D, heralded by Toshiba's early ZL2 TV, hasn't caught on, but still may make headway.

Top 5 BLU-RAY MOVIES



The Book of Life 3D
This colourful 'toon produced by fan-favourite Guillermo del Toro draws heavily on Mexican folklore – the result is a visual champion in both its 2D and 3D incarnations, and a shot in the arm for the animation genre.
★★★★½



The Babadook
The multichannel mix for this mature Australian horror flick mixes menacing bass with an eerie score that'll scare you silly, while the BD ups the fright-factor with its high-contrast 2.40:1 visuals.
★★★★½



Paddington
The pawed Peruvian gets a chance to shine on the bigscreen in this mischievous live action/CGI mashup. Junior AV-holics will dig the comedy antics, while even the grumpiest adults will savour the pin-sharp picture.
★★★½☆



Edge of Tomorrow 3D
Tom Cruise's oh-so-enjoyable sci-fi caper didn't light up the box office, but it should be given a warm welcome on BD. Image quality here is sublime, and the 7.1 soundmix marries brutal bass with whizzy effects.
★★★★½



Lucy
Director Luc Besson covers some big ideas in this loony sci-fi flick, but doesn't ignore his passion for madcap car chases and choreographed action. Brilliant fun, and on a Blu-ray that relishes the stylised visuals.
★★★½☆

Top 10 BLU-RAY PLAYERS

All prices are approx and may have changed



1 **Oppo BDP-103D** → £600 ★★★★★
Oppo's first deck for two years was worth waiting for. The universal BDP-103EU featured a class-leading build and all manner of bonus goodies, including twin HDMI inputs. AV performance was faultless, and the onscreen menus superb. This newer model, the BDP-103D, adds Darbee Visual Presence processing for you to play with. *HCC #228*



2 **Pioneer BDP-LX88** → £1,300 ★★★★★
The Japanese corp returns to the disc-playing high-end with a universal deck that weighs more than your AVR and drips with user tweaks and processing features. Stonking performer. *HCC #246*



3 **Oppo BDP-105D** → £1,100 ★★★★★
This heavyweight deck builds upon the premium picture performance of the BDP-103D with a wealth of audiophile upgrades – if you're serious about music, check it out. *HCC #234*



4 **Arcam FMJ UDP411** → £1,200 ★★★★½
Pristine visuals – including upscaled SD – and a classy sonic performance grant this Arcam instant appeal. The design and build is commensurate with the premium price tag. *HCC #244*



5 **Sony BDP-S7200** → £220 ★★★★½
A Sony deck without the curious angular design, the BDP-S7200 offers SACD support, hi-res audio streaming and 4K upscaling that's worth investigation. Not too pricey, either. *HCC #239*



6 **Panasonic DMP-BDT700** → £500 ★★★★☆
Claiming THX-certified 4K upscaling and HDMI 2.0 60p passthrough, this mid-range deck from Panasonic is a good partner for a modern display. Great audio option, too. *HCC #237*



7 **Samsung BD-H6500** → £130 ★★★★☆
Our current fave bargain BD deck – actually Samsung's 'flagship' model – is packed with Smart features, including support for the brand's multiroom system, and super-quick operation. *HCC #236*



8 **LG BP645** → £100 ★★★★☆
An affordable, likeable offering from LG. The BP645 claims Spotify compatibility and Wi-Fi-enabled headphone listening among its bonus features. Slim but lightweight design. *HCC #236*



9 **Pioneer BDP-160** → £130 ★★★★☆
The successor to the BDP-150 adds integrated Wi-Fi, making media file playback simpler. The Smart cupboard is still practically empty, but SACD support softens the blow. *HCC #227*



10 **Toshiba BDX5500** → £120 ★★★½☆
The key attraction of Toshiba's £120 player (aside from its 3D, Miracast, 4K scaling and DLNA features) is its small form factor and vertical alignment. Good for space-tight setups. *HCC #238*

Tech Info: Blu-ray players

Matching your deck to your AV receiver: Blu-ray decks are designed to deliver top-notch images but Blu-ray is also about enjoying superior quality sound. When choosing a player, bear in mind the connectivity and decoding features of your AV receiver.
If you're still using an older model that doesn't offer HDMI inputs, then you'll need a Blu-ray player with multichannel analogue audio outputs to enjoy decoded hi-res surround sound formats. Similarly, older but still HDMI-equipped receivers may not be able to cope with 3D video signals, in which case you'll need a deck with dual HDMI outputs – one channelling audio to your receiver amp, the other piping video direct to your TV.

What about the PlayStation?: Sony's console still represents an easy path to hi-def heaven. For a low-budget home cinema system, the £200 PS3 Slim (160GB) makes a decent choice – especially if you like playing games (in 3D, if you fancy it). Control via a joypad is a pain, though, and the console runs more noisily than most BD spinners. The newer, more expensive PS4 is a much better gaming machine, but won't play CDs!



Demo delight

Edge of Tomorrow: This enjoyable, FX-packed Tom Cruise sci-fi scooped the Best Picture Quality gong in our Movie Awards. Shot on film for a realistic aesthetic, it transfers over to Blu-ray with a pristine 1080p image. The detailing is simply astonishing!



Top 10 PROJECTORS

All prices are approx and may have changed

1



Sony VPL-VW300ES → £5,800

★★★★★

Auditioning the newest, most affordable member of Sony's 4K range is a no-brainer. It loses a shade of brightness and the lens memory feature of its VPL-VW500ES stablemate, but retains the cinematic verve. Top of the class. *HCC #243*

2



JVC DLA-X500R → £5,000 ★★★★★

Armed with a more adept third generation of the brand's proprietary e-shift technology, the X500R continues JVC's winning ways – contrast rich, sharp and full of tweaks. *HCC #232*

3



Epson EH-TW7200 → £1,900 ★★★★★

Priced to appeal to those unable to dabble in the £3,000 market, Epson's mid-ranger is a great purchase. No frame interpolation on offer, but colours, contrast and brightness impress. *HCC #232*

4



JVC DLA-X700R → £7,300 ★★★★★

A hefty chunk more expensive than the X500R, but with an improved contrast performance (and more flexible installation options) that will reward those who splash the cash. *HCC #238*

5



Optoma HD50 → £1,000 ★★★★★

With a retweaked user interface that improves upon previous Optoma light-cannons, the 12V-trigger-toting HD50 is a brilliant budget buy. *HCC #239*

6



Epson EH-TW6600W → £1,700 ★★★★½

This offers plenty of bang for your bigscreen buck, including wireless HD (with switching skills), flexible setup, useful processing features and a punchy, vivid image quality. *HCC #241*

7



BenQ W1070+ → £650 ★★★★½

An accomplished low-budget DLP model, the W1070+ offers ISF-certified calibration and a 12V trigger in conjunction with a sharp, bright, detailed performance. Bit of a bargain! *HCC #240*

8



Philips Screeneo HDP1590 → £1,500 ★★★★½

Neatly designed, the Screeneo offers ultra-short throw projection thrills, albeit at 720p (and the DVB tuner is SD). Good speakers and networking skills complete a nice package. *HCC #233*

9



Sony VPL-HW55ES → £2,800 ★★★★½

Not one of Sony's 4K models, but this keenly priced Full HD projector delivers where it counts, with solid calibration options, simple setup and brilliant 2D visuals. No 12V trigger. *HCC #230*

10



Epson EH-TW9200W → £3,000 ★★★★½

A brilliant mid-range projector with wireless HD transmission and ISF certification, yet the noise generated when running in 'Normal' lamp mode could be a concern for some. *HCC #231*

Tech Info: Projectors



Installation: Although projectors can be temporarily placed on a cupboard, stand or shelf situated at the rear of the room (use the adjustable feet on its base to level the image so that it aligns with the screen), a much better long-term solution is to mount it on your ceiling with an appropriate bracket. Projectors can be quite heavy, though, so it's important to ensure that the bracket is attached firmly – ideally, it should be secured to a joist. Position your PJ so that an imaginary line from its lens to the opposite side of the room hits the screen exactly half-way along its width. The location of your screen should therefore dictate where your projector is. A decent tape-measure or laser pointer will help you to determine the position.

Throw distance: Throw distance specifies the distance between the projector and screen for a focused image of given size. As the vast majority of projectors are equipped with a zoom lens, minimum and maximum throw distances are often specified – say, 3.01m to 6.08m for a 100in. 16:9 image. Shorter throw distances are ideal for smaller rooms, and longer ones for larger rooms. Simple.

Throw ratio: Sometimes, a manufacturer will quote a throw ratio rather than a throw distance. This is basically the throw distance divided by the image width. To get the projected image size, divide the distance between projector and screen by the specified figure. Once again, the inclusion of a zoom lens means that upper and lower figures are usually specified.

Award-winning home cinemas

At Cyberhomes our home cinemas aren't just about the amazing picture and jaw-dropping sound. We also implement the lighting, the seating, the intuitive control system from Savant, Crestron or Control4, and so much more.

For details visit www.cyberhomes.co.uk/hcc



Cyberhomes the smarter choice

Control4 UK Best Cinema Install 2012 · CEDIA Awards 2013 Best Home Cinema Finalist · CEDIA Awards 2014 Finalist · Control4 Award Winner · CEDIA Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association

Home cinema design and installation • Lighting control systems • Multi-room audio and video • Home automation
CCTV and security • Data and communication networks • Occupancy simulation • Heating and air conditioning

0845 094 2718 hello@cyberhomes.co.uk www.cyberhomes.co.uk

Top 10 SPEAKERS

All prices are approx and may have changed



1 B&W 683 Theatre 5.1 → £2,750
★★★★★

The first step on the floorstanding ladder in B&W's speaker stable, the revamped 600 Series incorporates new tweeter and bass driver designs and offers absurd value for money. Not the prettiest cabinets, but you really won't care. *HCC #234*



2 KEF R Series 7.1 → £6,500 ★★★★★
A 7.1 array mixing dipolar and direct surrounds, this authoritative package takes its cues from KEF's Blade concept speaker and offers faultless, largescale home cinema sonics. *HCC #217*



3 DALI Rubicon LCR 5.1 → £6,275 ★★★★★
Trickle-down tech from DALI's high-end Epicon speakers (including ribbon/dome hybrid tweeters) squeezed into on-wall cabinets – supremely adept with music and movies. *HCC #238*



4 Kreisel Sound Quattro 7.2 → £8,500 ★★★★★
Mixing two mammoth woofers with some surprisingly manageable multi-tweeter speakers (including TriFX surrounds) this US package is supremely assured. *HCC #232*



5 Artcoustic Spitfire SL 7.2 → £17,000 ★★★★★
Slimmed-down cabinets now even easier to install on-wall or behind a screen, with a multi-driver design ensuring they're easy to drive to high SPLs. Ideal for dedicated rooms. *HCC #233*



6 Tannoy Precision Series 5.1 → £4,450 ★★★★★
These speakers' classic look belies the brand's hi-fi heritage, but this multichannel setup works wonders with movies, too – a rich, large and dynamic sound is on offer. *HCC #226*



7 Definitive Technology ProCinema 600 → £500 ★★★★½
A compact system which achieves impressive scale courtesy of additional passive radiators mounted in the satellite cabinets. Slick styling and a cohesive, fun sound. *HCC #244*



8 Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1 → £1,500 ★★★★½
The Radius speakers have been revamped with new drivers and rear ports, and this 5.1 set provides a clear, detailed sound with plenty of heft. Floorstanders are an option, too. *HCC #230*

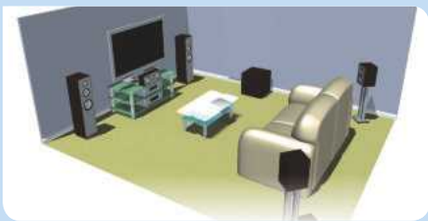


9 Acoustic Energy 1-Series 5.1 → £1,400 ★★★★☆
The unadventurous design won't appeal to some, but elsewhere this sensibly-priced floorstanding package ticks a lot of boxes. An unflustered sound that likes to go loud. *HCC #246*



10 Mission M³ → £700 ★★★★☆
The delightfully-designed cube cabinets of this dinky sub/sat setup are surprisingly effective at dispersing movie soundtracks. Could use some sharper detail clarity, though. *HCC #245*

Tech Info: Speakers



Centre speaker: Handles most of the dialogue and onscreen effects. Should be positioned above or below the screen as close to it as possible. Of course, if you're using a projector screen, it should ideally be placed behind it.

Front speakers: Left and right speakers should be positioned either side of the screen, in line with the centre. Turn the speakers in slightly to face the listener if there isn't an even movement of sound across the front of the room.

Subwoofer: Can be positioned wherever it sounds best or can be tucked out of sight due to the non-directional nature of low-frequency signals. Be aware that close positioning in corners or next to walls can create a boomy effect.

Surrounds: Position alongside the listener, pointing in or slightly behind the ears for a good surround effect. The back wall is not a good position for surrounds – it is, in fact, where you should locate the sixth and seventh speakers (rears) in a traditional 7.1 array.

Demo delight

Godzilla: Hollywood tackles the iconic aquatic beastie once again, and the Blu-ray comes armed with a DTS-HD MA 7.1 mix that's dynamic, powerful, aggressive, detailed and expansive from start to finish. Check out Chapter 8's M.U.T.O. circling sequence for a masterclass in precision and control.

HOME CINEMA | MULTI-ROOM AUDIO | MULTI-ROOM SKY & HDTV | LIGHTING CONTROL | HOME AUTOMATION
For a demonstration in our showroom call 01922 623000 | www.getthebigpicture.co.uk
THE big PICTURE
CEDIA Certified Electronic Systems Professionals
Certified Kaleidescape Specialist installer
HAA Home Acoustics Alliance Certified
isf ccc® Imaging Science Foundation Certified
Control4 Authorised GOLD Dealer 2013
CEDIA Awards 2009 Best Home Theatre Finalist
CEDIA Awards 2009 Best Home Theatre Finalist
CEDIA Awards 2011 Best Home Theatre Winner
CEDIA Awards 2012 Best Home Theatre Finalist
CEDIA Awards 2013 Highly Commended
CEDIA Awards 2013 Best Home Cinema Highly Commended
Control4 ISE Winner of Best Media Room 2012
Control4 ISE Winner of Best Cinema Install 2014
Control4 ISE Winner of Most Professional AV Rack 2014

Top 10 AV RECEIVERS/AV PROCESSORS

All prices are approx and may have changed

1



Onkyo TX-NR3030 → £2,500

★★★★★

The current king of Atmos AVRs, this 11-channel design enables four height speakers to be added to an existing 7.1 array with ease. Lithe on its feet and with exemplary steering, this is multichannel audio at its best. *HCC #245*

2



Denon AVR-X5200W → £1,700 ★★★★★
Offering Atmos – and Auro-3D via a paid upgrade – the Denon X5200W offers nine amp channels and 11.2 processing. Energetic sound and flexible setup. *HCC #243*

3



Onkyo TX-NR838 → £1,000 ★★★★★
A nicely-specced mid-range AVR, offering 5.1.2 Atmos playback (as well as regular 7.1) in addition to HDCP 2.2 support, which will please future-gazers. Crisp-sounding sonics. *HCC #240*

4



Arcam AVR750 → £4,000 ★★★★★
If all you want from an AV receiver is vast power and effortless performance, this high-end 7.1-channel beast is tailored to you. Little bonus features beyond audio networking. *HCC #225*

5



Marantz NR-1605 → £600 ★★★★★
A brilliant option for those cowed by full-form AVRs, the NR-1605 sees Marantz retool its slender line to include integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth. Agile, sprightly and easy to use. *HCC #239*

6



Datasat LS10 → £10,000 ★★★★★
The 'entry-level' AV slab in Datasat's home audio range, this processor (upgradable to Auro-3D for a fee) is all about precision. Feature-lite, but it sounds phenomenal. *HCC #244*

7



Yamaha RX-A3040 → £2,000 ★★★★★
This superb Atmos-ready flagship AVR features a fluid, dynamic sonic signature, slick operation and reassuringly robust design and build. Good in stereo mode, too. *HCC #239*

8



Primare SPA23 → £3,500 ★★★★½
A stripped-down five-channel amp that majors on sublime, and power-packed, multichannel delivery. Limited functionality, but that's not what this luxury slab is all about. *HCC #237*

9



Pioneer VSX-924 → £500 ★★★★½
Pioneer's newest £500 model brings Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, an even better control app, HDMI 2.0 specification and under-the-hood tweaks. A great-value, good performer. *HCC #236*

10



Yamaha RX-V577 → £500 ★★★★½
Loaded with DSP modes (some fun, some not) and Wi-Fi-enabled for audio streaming, this clean-sounding Yamaha is a great low-budget option. Bluetooth via optional dongle. *HCC #237*

Tech Info: AV receivers



Tackling new heights: A recent innovation in AVR circles is the introduction of Dolby Atmos, the object-based sound format that has taken off in commercial cinemas and is supported in the home by the likes of Onkyo, Pioneer, Denon, Marantz and Yamaha. This requires new height speakers in addition to a regular 'flat' 5.1 or 7.1 speaker configuration. The heights can either be physically mounted in/on your ceiling, or provided via up-firing reflective models. Setup can be complex, but the results are certainly impressive. Atmos-encoded Blu-rays are a bit thin on the ground, but you can use Dolby Surround post-processing with regular 5.1/7.1 soundtracks to get the most from your new AVR/speakers. Rivals to Atmos are Auro-3D, which uses height speakers in a different configuration, and the forthcoming DTS:X. Most AVR brands have already pledged support for the latter.

How much power?: Many of the mass-market AV receiver manufacturers are involved in a specifications race to see who can say their model is the most powerful, which can be confusing for consumers. For instance, both Krell's £7,000 S-1500 seven-channel power amp and Yamaha's £500 RX-V675 both claim 7 x 150W – the important part is that Krell's figure is into an eight-ohm load with all channels driven, and that Yamaha's is with one channel into a four-ohm load, which is hardly a real-world situation. The best advice is ignore the numbers game and get a demo of your desired AVR with the same, or similar, speakers that you intend to partner it with.

Top 5 BONUS FEATURES



Scream Queens: Horror Heroines Exposed
Found on 88 Films' recent hi-def outing for classic 1980s slasher *Graduation Day*, this feature-length doc lets some of the genre's leading ladies reminisce about the horror industry.
★★★★☆



Gravity: Mission Control
A fascinating nine-part documentary that tells you everything you could ever want to know about the technical challenges that had to be overcome to create Alfonso Cuarón's sci-fi smash.
★★★★★



The Furious Gods: The Making of Prometheus
Ridley Scott's films always come loaded with extra features (remember *Blade Runner*?) and *Prometheus* is no exception. This is easily one of the best *Making of...* docs ever made.
★★★★★



Episode Reconstructions
Only 20 of the 49 episodes of the BBC sci-fi series *Out of the Unknown* still exist in the archives. Thankfully, the BFI's DVD boxset uses surviving audio and stills to reconstruct several of these missing shows.
★★★★☆



Evolution with Extinction
Clocking in at around two hours, this eight-part supplement looks at every aspect of the creation of Michael Bay's *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, from developing the story right up to the film's Hong Kong premiere.
★★★★☆

Top 10 SUBWOOFERS

All prices are approx & may have changed

1 

SVS SB-2000 → £650 ★★★★★

This follow up to the SB-1000, which incorporates a new 12in driver and revamped Sledge DSP amplifier, offers immense value for money. A mid-sized woofer that imbibes your Blu-rays with potent LFE, the SB-2000 sounds quick and taut, and is a perfect introduction to what a truly good sub can accomplish. *HCC #233*

2 

REL 212SE → £2,750 ★★★★★
Lush design joins engineering nous in this premium sub with two active 12in drivers supported by a pair of passive radiators. Loud, deep and impactful, your BDs are in safe hands. *HCC #246*

3 

JL Audio Fathom F212 → £5,900 ★★★★★
The US brand arrives in the UK in style – this 2 x 12in, 3,000W brute not only looks gorgeous, it's capable of a mindblowing performance. Got a big room? Get one of these! *HCC #214*

4 

Tannoy TS2.12 → £550 ★★★★★
The TS2.12 is easily Tannoy's best woofer yet – using a 12in driver (opposite a passive 12in cone) and 500W amp to deliver a rich bass performance. Affordable and good-looking, too. *HCC #208*

5 

REL S-5 → £1,600 ★★★★★
A step up from REL's affordable T series, this 12in model is large and weighty, with a performance level to match. Fast and tight but capable of dropping very low indeed. *HCC #234*

6 

Bowers & Wilkins DB1 → £3,250 ★★★★★
Featuring a bipolar arrangement of 12in drivers powered by 1,000W of amplification, B&W's stylish flagship sub is a faultless performer, offering both musicality and sheer muscle. *HCC #197*

7 

Bowers & Wilkins PV1D → £1,200 ★★★★★
One of the coolest-looking subs on the planet, B&W's PV1D uses DSP trickery to craft an opulent low-end performance. The touch-sensitive OLED display is pure class. *HCC #212*

8 

JL Audio E-Sub e112 → £2,050 ★★★★½
This 12in, 1,500W model from JL Audio's 'entry-level' line seems pricey, but its performance, design and tuning options make the investment oh-so worthwhile. *HCC #240*

9 

REL Habitat 1 → £1,300 ★★★★½
With its LongBow wireless system and wall-mountable design, REL's newest woofer is aimed at those seeking discreet bass. Twin 6.5in drivers work fast and with considerable grip. *HCC #231*

10 

SVS PB-2000 → £750 ★★★★½
The ported sibling to the SB-2000, this woofer uses the same driver and amp arrangement, but in a far larger cabinet. Bass goes deeper, but not at the expense of finesse. *HCC #243*

Tech Info



Why use more than one sub?: Using two subwoofers (or perhaps four) should, in theory, bring huge rewards in terms of bass performance. But remember that LFE is a tricky beast to control. Running two subs may simply double problems in your room like room boom and suck-outs, where outgoing and reflected bass sounds cancel each other out. If you have some flexibility in where you place subwoofers, trial and error may well throw up some interesting results. The acoustics wizard Floyd E Toole (his book *Sound Reproduction: The Acoustics and Psychoacoustics of Loudspeakers and Rooms* is fine bedtime reading) suggests one LFE sub to either side of the room may be best for accuracy while placing them in the front corners would be best for overall bass power. Yet there is no hard and fast rule as to what will work best for every room, and you may find that simply using one (large) subwoofer is preferable as it's the easiest to get sounding right.

Demo delight

Fury: The DTS-HD 5.1 track of Brad Pitt's tank drama is truly a thing to savour, with the audio engineers striving hard to deliver a packed, detailed soundfield that puts you right in the action. And, with its frequent artillery explosions, it's no surprise to find the LFE channel getting a thorough workout. Shells hit deliciously hard with taut bass throbs, while the eponymous tank's rumbles will scare your neighbours.

Top 5 CONSOLE GAMES



Halo: The Master Chief Collection
Xbox One releases don't come much more essential than this collection of remastered HD versions of the first four *Halo* games, plus access to the beta version of the upcoming *Halo 5*.
★★★★★



Far Cry 4
Ubisoft cements its position as the undisputed king of the 'sandbox-shooter' as it serves up a beautifully-rendered and sonically immersive Nepalese nation state for you to blast your way around. Huge fun.
★★★★☆



Alien Isolation
This fantastic 'survival-horror' captures the unsettling atmosphere of Ridley Scott's feature film with aplomb. The lighting effects and audio cues are suitably spooky, and the gameplay is nerve-shredding.
★★★★½



The Order 1886
Sony's puzzle-infused actioner may prove a little short in run-time for seasoned gamers, but it's graphically sensational – we love the use of the 'Scope ratio – and the multichannel audio is a treat.
★★★★★



Dragon Age: Inquisition
Finished with *Skyrim*? Then pick up this third instalment in the *Dragon Age* fantasy RPG series. A great-looking title, with plenty of side-quests littered around its vast open world to keep you adventuring for hours.
★★★★½

Top 10 ACCESSORIES

All prices are approx and may have changed

1



Now TV box → £10 ★★★★★

An unqualified bargain, this Wi-Fi VOD streamer from Sky (and built upon Roku hardware) brings BBC iPlayer, Demand 5 and the Roku Channel Store to any HDMI-toting telly, plus subscription access to Sky Movies and Sky Sports. The quality of the adaptive bitrate streaming is impressive, and the £10 tag gets you P&P and an HDMI cable. *HCC #226*

2



Devolo dLAN 650 Triple+ starter pack → £120 ★★★★★
This package makes Powerline networking fast (claimed at up to 600Mbps) and easy. The three-port Ethernet extender is sleekly designed, and provides a regular plug socket, too. *HCC #239*

3



Dune HD Base 3D → £250 ★★★★★
A media player for the AV enthusiast. Full-width and fully-featured, it provides support for 3D BD rips and much more, with a slick user interface and plenty of connectivity. *HCC #235*

4



Amazon Fire TV → £70 ★★★★½
A media player for the Smart generation, this affordable puck features class-leading voice recognition that makes content browsing fun – indispensable for Amazon Prime lovers. *HCC #243*

5



HDAnywhere mHub → £1,000 ★★★★½
An impressively flexible multiroom solution that allows HD video and audio to be sent via Cat cable to four displays from multiple sources. Includes HDMI mirroring, too. Handy. *HCC #240*

6



Philips Hue → £180 ★★★★½
These Wi-Fi enabled lightbulbs might be expensive (this £180 starter pack includes two, plus the Wi-Fi bridge) but making your own multicoloured lighting scheme is a blast. *HCC #220*

7



Monitor Audio Airstream A100 → £400 ★★★★☆
Partner your TV with the speakers of your choice with this networked, AirPlay-streaming two-channel amp. Great, svelte design – bit awkward to control, though. *HCC #238*

8



Microsoft Xbox One → £430 ★★★★☆
Not as graphically potent as the PS4 (below) but the new Xbox lives up to its billing as a home entertainment hub – voice control and multi-tasking tricks prove very useful. *HCC #230*

9



Sony PlayStation 4 → £350 ★★★★☆
The PS4 offers a killer gaming experience, with the under-the-hood power resulting in great-looking games. 3D Blu-ray playback has now been added via firmware. *HCC #229*

10



Philips SW750M → £130 ★★★½☆
A multiroom-ready speaker that works with the Spotify Connect service, this curved cabinet offers a decent, punchy sound for the price tag. No Bluetooth, DLNA or external hookup. *HCC #246*

Tech Info: Media players



What about my TV?: Most flatscreen TVs from the major brands (Sony, Samsung, Panasonic, LG, Toshiba and Sharp) also incorporate media player functionality, using Ethernet or Wi-Fi to stream from your home network, or from plugged-in USB drives. Most modern Blu-ray players offer this, too. However, file support is rarely as extensive as on dedicated devices from the likes of Western Digital and A.C. Ryan, and our experience shows some are more adept at playback from USB than over a network. Nor (obviously) is a TV or BD player portable. If your media collection extends beyond JPEGs and MP3s into lossless audio rips and esoteric HD video formats, then a standalone player is a good investment.

Storage: You can, if you really want, store all your files on a plethora of USB drives, or on your PC, but it's best to get a NAS (Network Attached Storage) device for simplified sharing of your media across a network with multiple players, such as one from Netgear's ReadyNAS range (pictured). These dedicated devices often offer RAID array file backup, and are managed via browser software. Storage capacity can be anything from 1TB to 12TB and beyond.



Top 5 BLU-RAY/DVD BOX SETS



Wolf Hall
The BBC's recent six-part historical drama features an A-list cast and lavish production values, while this BD boxset carries crisp 1080i visuals and an evocative DTS-HD MA stereo soundtrack.
★★★★½



Game of Thrones: The Complete Fourth Season
Now in its fourth run, HBO's award-winning fantasy series continues to dazzle, as do the Blu-ray releases – the AV presentation here is superb, backed up by plenty of extras.
★★★★★



Vincent Price in Six Gothic Tales by Edgar Allen Poe
Limited to just 2,000 copies, this bumper boxset boasts feature-packed editions of six classic shockers starring the 'Merchant of Menace', four of which make their UK Blu-ray debut here.
★★★★☆



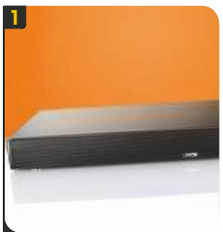
The Avengers: The Complete Series Four
A combination of beautifully restored episodes and a vast array of supplementary features ensure that this rather pricey boxset is a must-own for fans of the cult '60s British TV series.
★★★★☆



Twin Peaks: The Entire Mystery
Both seasons of the US cult TV series and the prequel flick *...Fire Walk With Me* are given a fan-pleasing 10-disc BD release, sporting 7.1 DTS-HD audio and a treasure trove of bonus bits.
★★★★½

Top 10 SOUNDBARS & SOUNDBASES

All prices are approx & may have changed

1 

Canton DM75 → £450 ★★★★½

Bigger and bolder than the already excellent DM50 (which retails for £100 less), Canton's sturdily-built soundbase speaker lacks HDMI inputs but makes up for it with Bluetooth streaming and a brilliant 2.1-channel performance packing weight, scale and detail. Simplistic, understated design. *HCC #243*

2 

Monitor Audio ASB-2 → £1,000 ★★★★½
This premium proposition marries Monitor Audio's C-CAM drivers with AirPlay and DLNA music streaming. Performance is exemplary – powerful and polished in equal measure. *HCC #229*

3 

Yamaha YSP-2500 → £800 ★★★★½
An HDMI-switching 'sound projector' using Yamaha's Beam tech to craft impressive surround sonics from its drivers. Efficient sub, plenty of detailing and fun/useful app control. *HCC #243*

4 

Cambridge Audio TV5 → £300 ★★★★½
Twin 6.5in bass drivers lend the TV5's sound some decent low-end heft, but not to the detriment of the rest of the soundstage. An enjoyable, balanced listen. Easy to use. *HCC #245*

5 

Q Acoustics Media 4 → £400 ★★★★½
A no-nonsense offering from the speaker specialist, which ignores HDMI inputs and daft DSP modes in favour of creating a nuanced, solid 2.1 soundscape. *HCC #238*

6 

Philips HTL9100 → £600 ★★★★☆
A soundbar/sub that incorporates two removable side speakers to allow it to become a wireless 5.1 system, this Philips is a neat proposition, and easy to install. *HCC #238*

7 

Pioneer SBX-N500 → £250 ★★★★☆
£250 gets you this single-enclosure audio offering with welcome DLNA functionality, USB input, HDMI ARC output (but no input) and Bluetooth. Weighty, vibrant sound. *HCC #238*

8 

Yamaha SRT-1000 → £450 ★★★★☆
A reasonably sleek soundbase with a thumping bass output, crisp highs, app control and Beam driver tech that strives hard to deliver a 5.1 experience. *HCC #243*

9 

Humax STE-1000BSW → £180 ★★★★☆
A striking design and bargain price tag will get Humax's debut 'bar plenty of admirers. Performance is decent for the money, albeit lacking low-frequency finesse. *HCC #238*

10 

Samsung HW-J8500 → £900 ★★★★☆
Samsung's second-gen curved soundbar ups the driver count and the price tag. Performance is decent, but you can find more finesse and bass integration elsewhere. *HCC #246*

Tech Info: TV platforms



TV addicts – go free, or pay-to-view?:
The landscape of the UK television industry has changed hugely in the last decade. The analogue switch-off has created a competitive market in free-to-air platforms, while Sky and Virgin Media are squaring up to the likes of EE TV, Amazon Prime and Netflix. Deciding which service is right for you can be complex, and you may find your needs are best catered for by a combination.

Sky+HD: The long-running satcaster offers a plethora of HD channels, with content including recent movie releases, live sports and sought-after US shows. Hardware options include the 2TB dual-tuner PVR.

Virgin Media TiVo: The cable giant offers a three-tuner PVR (1TB) with intelligent TiVo recording tricks, catch-up apps (including Netflix and Spotify), and over 240 channels (depending on package). Premium Sky content can be added on a monthly basis.

Freeview: The common option when it comes to TVs and set-top boxes. Freeview offers 13 HD channels (depending on regional roll-out) plus SD and radio. No contract fee.

Freesat: Satellite service offering a similar – but not identical – channel lineup to Freeview, delivered to your HD flatscreen via a dish but without a subs cost. As with Freeview, budget-priced STBs are available.

YouView: This relatively new kid on the block integrates the UK's main catchup portals directly into a backwards EPG. Again, channels are broadly similar to Freeview and there's no contract. Humax (PVRs) and Sony (TVs) are leading the hardware charge.

Top 5 BACK-CATALOGUE BLU-RAYS



Thief: Limited Edition
Boasting a 4K restoration of the director's cut in addition to an exclusive hi-def presentation of the original theatrical version, this Blu-ray release of Michael Mann's stunning debut feature is an absolute steal.
★★★★½



The Killing
This Blu-ray release of Stanley Kubrick's third film represents incredible value for money. Not only do you get a 2K restoration of that superb crime thriller, but the extras include an HD version of his earlier film, *Killer's Kiss*!
★★★★½



Wooden Crosses
This French war movie released in 1932 looks in great shape on this Masters of Cinema Blu-ray thanks to a new 4K restoration. There's plenty of discussion about the disc's production among the ample extras, too.
★★★★★



The Wizard of Oz 3D
Delivering the best-looking version of the film to date (derived from a new 8K scan), this superb pack also squeezes in all the original extras and a 3D conversion that adds layers of fun to Dorothy's adventure.
★★★★½



The Day The Earth Caught Fire
The highlight of the BFI's 'Sci-Fi: Days of Wonder' festivities, this stunning Blu-ray restoration should introduce this underrated British disaster flick to the wider audience it deserves.
★★★★½

MUSICAL IMAGES
HARPENDEN • EDGWARE • BECKENHAM

3 times award winner
HOME CINEMA CHOICE
"Best Multiroom Installation"



THE BEST HOME CINEMA CHOICE

With 3 showrooms and 7 demonstration rooms, featuring all the latest systems and award winning separates from the world's leading manufacturers, we promise every customer the finest entertainment experience. Whatever your budget, whether you simply want a new radio or a complete Home Entertainment installation, we're here to help.

HIFI • HOME CINEMA • MULTIROOM AUDIO • HOME AUTOMATION
LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS • A/V DESIGN & CONSULTANCY

Musical Images Showrooms Opening times 9.30am - 5.30am. Monday - Saturday

82 High Street, Harpenden
Hertfordshire AL5 2SP
Tel: 01582 764246
harpenden@musicalimages.co.uk

NEW SHOWROOM

173 Station Road, Edgware
Middlesex HA8 7JX
Tel: 020 8952 5535
edgware@musicalimages.co.uk

126 High Street, Beckenham
Kent BR3 1EB
Tel: 020 8663 3777
beckenham@musicalimages.co.uk

www.musical-images.co.uk
musical images
@musical_images

Audio Visual Lifestyle Ltd trading as Musical Images. Finance options available, subject to status. E&OE

SAPPHIRE

When you want the best Projector screen or lift Sapphire have the answer

For when only the best will do ...



3 Year Warranty

Imagine if .....

* You had a screen that was the envy of your friends because of the image quality.
* Fitting it was so easy - you fix your brackets drop the screen on and tighten (not in-ceiling).
* If the screen was able to drop down automatically when you turn on your projector using the 12V trigger.
* If the fabric was one of the best in the business and suitable for 4K projection giving vibrant colour.
* If the product had a 3 year comprehensive warranty.

Dreams are now reality!











QR Code lifts

QR Code Screens

Projector lifts and screens available for next day delivery from many quality retailers and distributors in UK and Ireland

www.Sapphireav.com

Top 5 PVRs



Virgin Media TiVo, £subscription
This triple-tuner PVR offers ultimate recording flexibility, useful features – you can undelete deleted shows! – and awesome TiVo functionality. A no brainer if you're in a cable area
★★★★★



Sky+HD, £subscription
Sky's channel choice is second-to-none and its twin tuner 2TB PVR is a perfect partner. The recent EPG tweak is welcome and Anytime (the push VOD service) is brilliant for catching up on new movies
★★★★★



Panasonic DMR-HW220, £250
Panasonic's PVR mixes a 1TB hard drive with its Smart Viera functionality and media streaming – so at £250 it's an absolute steal, regardless of the uninspired design
★★★★★



Humax DTR-T2000, £180
This second-gen 500GB YouView PVR benefits from some under-the-hood tweaks that make the time-shifting experience slicker than ever. Useful app control, but no home media playback offered.
★★★★½



EE TV Smart Box £subscription
This quad-tuner 1TB PVR, from the mobile/broadband corp, offers innovative Replay 24-hour channel recording and great Smart device streaming. Needs more catch-up though
★★★★☆

Top 5 HEADPHONES



Sony MDR-HW700DS, £800
Comfy cans supplied with an HDMI surround processor, enabling multichannel audio to be fed to a virtual 9.1-channel soundstage. The effect is superb – great for late-night listening
★★★★★



Oppo PM-1, £1,100
Audiophile-grade, using planar magnetic driver designs, and with a lush design and build. The sound quality of the PM-1s is superb, so while these are undoubtedly costly, buyers won't be disappointed
★★★★★



Lindy Cromo NCX-100, £100
A cost-effective domestic option and great for travelling, these noise-cancelling 'phones (which can also be used as a normal passive design) feature a pleasant, balanced sound
★★★★☆



PSB M4U1, £220
Aimed at both home and on-the-move use (and supplied with a carry case and two cable options), the M4U1s offer solid bass response and impactful highs. Build quality is good, as is comfort
★★★★★



AKG K550, £200
The styling of these closed-back cans is reassuringly 'classic' and the sound signature is surprisingly open and spacious. Use them for movie watching and you'll enjoy a good sense of scale and weight
★★★★½

Top 5 SYSTEMS



Panasonic SC-BTT505, £600
Two-way driver arrangements in these grown-up looking speakers (plus a dizzying range of features) make this a great purchase. Big, dynamic sound, with strong dialogue
★★★★☆



Samsung HT-H7750WM, £850
The top-flight system from Samsung in 2014 uses tallboy speakers all around. Plenty of features here, and a fulsome 5.1 performance, but the build quality is a bit disappointing
★★★★☆



Harman/Kardon BDS470, £650
Harman's 2.1 system eschews 'net TV and streaming features but majors in heavyweight build quality and solid AV performance. We tested a 2.1 iteration – 5.1 is also available
★★★★☆



LG BH8220B, £650
With its silver finish, this is a suitable one-box system to partner with LG's flatscreen TVs, with a commendable, if slightly lacking in HF finesse, sound. Additional features including CD-ripping to USB. Handy
★★★★☆



Panasonic SC-HTB570, £350
A commendable slim-line 2.1 system that can also be clicked together to make a soundbar. The punchy wireless subwoofer does a lot of the work. Bluetooth music streaming is onboard
★★★★☆

HOME CINEMA Choice

ISSUE #248 ON SALE June 4

→ IN THE NEXT ISSUE

DTS vs Dolby The next-gen format war that's ready to rage in your cinema room
Top secret... Psst! We reveal the greatest spy movies on Blu-ray
PS4 How to give your console a boost

→ ON TEST

PMC Twenty Series speakers Denon AVR-X7200W Atmos receiver **LG 65EC970 4K OLED screen** SVS Prime 5.1 speakers **Otone Audio SoundBase** Samsung HT-J7750W all-in-one system **PLUS** News, software, opinion, AV rooms and more!

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE – BUT ONLY FOR THE BETTER

AUDIOVISUAL ONLINE

- Home Cinema
- Hi-Fi
- Speakers
- Brackets
- Accessories
- Cables
- Furniture
- Mounts

Expert Advice
Contact us with your questions, we have the answers!



Diamond 155 Speakers
Wharfedale
- ✓ Walnut Pearl
- ✓ Rosewood Quilted
- ✓ Cinnamon Cherry
- ✓ Bargain Floorstanders



From **£249**

Diamond 157 Speakers
Wharfedale
- ✓ Traditional speaker
- ✓ Wider soundstage
- ✓ Three finishes
- ✓ Bass reflex port system



From **£349**

Diamond 155 5.1 Speaker Package
Wharfedale
- ✓ 2 x Diamond 155
- ✓ 101C Centre
- ✓ WH-S10 Subwoofer
- ✓ 2 x DFS on-wall



~~Was: £1200.00~~
£699

Diamond 101C Center Speaker
Wharfedale
- ✓ Traditional
- ✓ Compact
- ✓ Three finishes
- ✓ Sturdy cabinet



~~Was: £229.95~~
£99

Performance Graphite 6.35mm 1.5m
QED
- ✓ 99.999% Oxygen free
- ✓ 24K gold plated
- ✓ Ergonomically sculpted
- ✓ QED lifetime guarantee



~~Was: £39.95~~
£15

Vector V-W8 White Subwoofer
MONITOR AUDIO
- ✓ 8" long throw woofer
- ✓ Forward firing driver
- ✓ 100Watt amplifier
- ✓ Auto-on-off facility



~~Was: £259.95~~
£130

TS2.10 Black Vinyl Subwoofer
TANNOY
- ✓ Double driver config
- ✓ 300 Watt amplifier
- ✓ 25mm cabinet
- ✓ Side firing



~~Was: £449.00~~
£299

CX-S Satellite Speakers
AUDICA
- ✓ Compact
- ✓ Stylish
- ✓ High performance
- ✓ Aluminium enclosure



~~Was: £299.00~~
£149

Performance 3.5mm Jack To Jack Cable 3m
QED
- ✓ 99.999% Oxygen free
- ✓ 24K gold plated
- ✓ Ergonomically sculpted
- ✓ QED lifetime guarantee



~~Was: £29.95~~
£14.95

Element EMT850 TV Cabinet
alphason
- ✓ With Black Plinth
- ✓ Adjustable shelves
- ✓ Good ventilation
- ✓ Media storage



~~Was: £274.99~~
£150

Airstream A100 Airplay Amplifier
MONITOR AUDIO
- ✓ 5* Product
- ✓ Apple Airplay
- ✓ Router free music
- ✓ Totally silent operation



~~Was: £399.00~~
£199

Airstream S300 Wireless Speaker
MONITOR AUDIO
- ✓ Multi-zone
- ✓ Apple Airplay
- ✓ Airstream direct
- ✓ IR Remote control unit



~~Was: £349.00~~
£249

Tria 1 Platinum Silver Shelf System
OMNIMOUNT
- ✓ Fully adjustable
- ✓ Cable management
- ✓ Paintable cover
- ✓ Easy to install



~~Was: £79.99~~
£29.99

XHK405 Twisted Pair Subwoofer Kit 9m
IXOS
- ✓ Twisted pair tech
- ✓ High grade PC-OFC
- ✓ Ultra slim design
- ✓ Gamma Geometry



~~Was: £34.99~~
£12.99

XHP180 8-Outlet Mains Extension Strip
IXOS
- ✓ Surge protection
- ✓ 1.5m cable
- ✓ Lifetime warranty
- ✓ AC Noise Filtering



~~Was: £29.99~~
£19.99

Performance HDMI To Mini HDMI 1m
QED
- ✓ Double screened cable
- ✓ Custom designed plugs
- ✓ 30 AWG conductors
- ✓ Ideal For HD cameras



~~Was: £28.99~~
£4.99

0% Finance available
From £500, terms apply.

AudioVisual Online acts as a credit intermediary and only offers credit products from Pay4Later Ltd and Close Brothers Retail Finance. Credit provided subject to age and status.



Representative example			
Purchase price	£1499	Payment p/m	£56.25
Deposit	£149	Total repayable	£1499
Amount of credit	£1350	Duration	24 Months

Best Prices Online
Prices checked daily. Seen something online cheaper?





Opening Hours

Monday - Friday	Saturday
9AM - 5PM	10AM - 5PM

audiovisualonline.co.uk
01706 878444

The 3000 Range is here

New sonic performance standards have been set with the 3000 series which uses a new 2 in 1 concentric dome tweeter.



3050 5.1 Speaker Package

- New tweeter
- Upgraded driver
- New cabinet design



From **£1195**

7000i Black 5.1 Speaker Package

8th October 2013 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



Only **£824**

Zensor 5 White 5.1 Speaker Package

18th October 2011 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



From **£1429**

WT150 5.1 In-Wall Speakers

- Magnetic Grille Fixing
- Gold Dome C-CAM
- MMP II



Only **£1265**

Unbeatable
BUNDLE DEALS
Buy a bundle and save one too!

Brush Cable Exit Plates Available



Speaker Wall Plates Available



Radius R90HT1 5.1 Speaker Package

19th September 2008 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



Only **£1499**

ASB-2 Airstream Soundbar

30% OFF

23rd December 2014 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



~~Was: £999.00~~
£699

RX-A3040 9.2 Channel AV Receiver

- 4K Upscaling
- Apple Airplay
- Dolby Atmos



~~Was: £1999.00~~
£Call

TX-NR3030 11.2 Channel AV Receiver

- 4K Upscaling
- Apple Airplay
- Dolby Atmos



~~Was: £2499.00~~
£Call

YSP-2500 Digital Soundbar

£200 OFF

1st October 2014 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



~~Was: £799.00~~
£599

VPL-HW55ES HD 3D Projector

19th March 2014 — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision ★★★★★



£2795

EH-TW6600 Home Cinema Projector

£250 OFF

- Sharp and bright
- Easy positioning
- Advanced imaging



~~Was: £1399.00~~
£1149

VPL-HW40ES HD 3D Projector

- Incredible cinematic experience
- Superb brightness
- Quiet operation



£1849

DLA-X500 Home Cinema Projector

- 2 Year Warranty
- Remote access 3D modes
- Ultra Quiet operation



£3799

SPITFIRE CINEMA

Save big with Spitfire Cinema

We're offering fantastic money-off vouchers when you buy any home cinema gear from Spitfire Cinema. Simply buy any Spitfire Cinema projection screen to receive a £200 voucher to use against any subsequent order on AudioVisual Online. Purchase Spitfire Cinema seating to earn £100 per seat, buy a row of three seats for example and you'll have £300 to spend off your next order.



Cable Workshop
Made to your exact specification.



Free Delivery
To most mainland UK addresses.



Showroom
Call and arrange a demo with us.





AV AVENGER

The internet nearly destroyed **Steve May**'s beloved movie collection. And if you're not careful, it may destroy yours as well

THESE DAYS YOU can't move for pundits proclaiming the death of physical media. Whatever your passion, be it DVDs and Blu-rays, CD and vinyl, or coffee table tomes, the connected mantra is largely the same: bin what you own and don't buy anything that requires a bag to carry it in. This is shockingly bad advice. But I nearly fell for it.

The attraction is obvious, of course, and if you're a long-suffering collector you'll be particularly vulnerable. When you're endangered by piles of stuff, with storage space lost, and boxes overflowing into sheds, garages and lofts, even the most irrational hoarder will begin to look for a solution.

I'd managed to resist any call for such a clearout largely because my predilection is for things borderline weird. Sure, it was hard to justify the space taken up by Adam Sandler discs, but the more treasured aspects of my movie collection were not so readily available. 1950s B movie fare, classic Universal horrors, British sixties fantasy flicks and so on. This is not the stuff Blinkbox is made of.

I know what you're thinking: there's plenty of streaming channels offering crap films. But they're all on Roku and the image quality makes even CD Video look good.

Sony's secret stash

It was the Crackle service that almost did me in. I stumbled across it on a new Sony TV – and incredibly, a good deal of my tawdry film collection was there, on tap and looking refreshingly sweet. The clincher was *The Damned* (listed under its US monicker *These Are The Damned*), an evocative slice of Hammer bunkum, starring Oliver Reed and a load of radioactive kids. The quality was excellent. Perhaps those message-board warriors were right after all. Mentally I began crating up my DVDs.

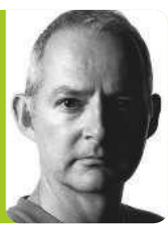
Then, without warning, Crackle was gone. On April 1 2014, all that was left was a terse post-it note declaring 'Crackle's UK service will no longer be operating.' It may have been April Fools but I wasn't laughing. Not the merest hint of an apology. Elvis had left the building. Had I actually mustered the energy to dump my discs off at the local charity shop I would have been bereft. Even now that close call gives me the shivers.

Crackle carries on regardless elsewhere. Following a deal with NBC Universal, the Sony-owned streamer has become increasingly mainstream. The studio even debuted ill-fated North Korean cause célèbre *The Interview* on it. Which amplifies my point: just like Kim Jong-Un, streaming services can't be trusted. They come, they go. They don't sit reassuringly on your shelf, unopened cellophane wrapper gathering dust forever. And invariably they have bad hair.

This doesn't mean VoD is bad, it's just no alternative to actually owning the stuff you love.

Naturally, subscribing to Netflix, Sky, Amazon Prime and goodness knows what else will take its toll on any collector. I buy less today than I did yesterday, because I no longer have to own everything I just want to see. But while Netflix may try and dazzle with *Daredevil* and *House of Cards*, I know it's constantly shunting stuff out the back door as licensing agreements expire. So I'll never buy into the idea that physical media is past its sell by date. That way lies madness. Trust me on this. When you wake up one morning to find the internet has vanished, I'll still have my Adam Sandler collection sitting on my shelf. Then we'll see who's laughing ■

Have you thought of throwing away your disc collection? Let us know: email letters@homecinemachoice.com



Steve May's Adam Sandler addiction was once so bad he was watching *I Now Pronounce you Chuck and Larry* three times a week

ILLUSTRATION: BY TEKURA MAEVA

Mr Scott, energize! Who says you can't fly in an armchair: **the Excite 5.1 system**. All there is.



DYNAUDIO

oppo



Available in
black or white

NEW PM-3

CLOSED-BACK PLANAR MAGNETIC HEADPHONES

Introducing the newest addition to our multi-award-winning planar magnetic headphone range.

PM-3 takes our outstanding proprietary planar magnetic technology and specifically optimizes it for portability.

- Unique OPPO planar magnetic driver technology
- Closed-back design provides noise isolation and privacy
- The World's lightest closed-back planar magnetic design
- High sensitivity suits a wide range of portable devices
- Comfortable fit makes listenening a pleasure – for hours on end.

oppodigital.co.uk